

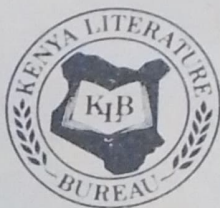
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1,000 KIKUYU PROVERBS

With Translations and English Equivalents

By

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KENYA LITERATURE BUREAU
NAIROBI

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

I am glad to offer this selection of Kikuyu proverbs to the young Akikuyu, makers of the future of the tribe.

The proverbs are the quintessence of Kikuyu eloquence, and represented for centuries the code of tribal laws used for lack of written books. They are full of wisdom and embody the maxims of natural law 'written by God in the heart of all men'. Therefore they are for the Akikuyu a precious inheritance, which must not be lost in the changes now taking place.

At the same time I trust that this book will be welcomed by the Europeans living in contact with or working for the welfare of this tribe. They will find in the book the key for understanding the point of view and psychology of the Akikuyu.

Kikuyu proverbs are endless. These were selected from collections made by several Consolata Fathers since the early years of the Mission and from lists supplied by Kikuyu teachers in response to a competition launched by the Mission's monthly magazine *Wathiomo Mũkinyu*.

For each proverb there is given first the literal translation, followed when necessary by a short explanation of its meaning and application, and finally the English equivalent where one could be found.

Although it might be found that certain proverbs are used in different ways and with different meanings, I have made certain that the commonest use has been given.

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. D. Plum, B.Sc., for the revision of the translation and for checking the English equivalents.

G. BARRA, I.M.C.

Consolata Catholic Mission,
Nyeri

9 December 1939.

1,000 KIKUYU PROVERBS



1. **Agikuyũ moi kũhitha ndia, matiũĩ kuhitha ũhoro**
The Kikuyu know how to conceal their quiver, but do not know how to conceal their secrets.
The Kikuyu, though very clever in concealing their arms, cannot keep secrets from the members of their tribe.
2. **Ageni erĩ matirĩ ũtugĩre**
Two guests (at the same time) have no welcome.
3. **Ageni erĩ na karirũĩ kao**
Two guests love a different song.
When you receive two visitors at the same time, you cannot treat them in the same manner, because they have different tastes.
Every man has his hobby horse.
4. **Aikaragia mbia ta njũũ ngigĩ**
He is a man that looks after money as 'njuu' looks after locusts.
'Njũũ' is a bird which accompanies migrating locusts to feed on them.
Much wants more.

5. **Aka erĩ nĩ nyūngũ igĩrĩ cia ũrogi**
Two wives are two pots full of poison.
 The more women you have in your house, the more troubles you must expect.
 Women's jars breed men's wars.
6. **Aka matirĩ cia ndiuro no cia nyiniko**
Women have no upright words, but only crooked ones.
 The Kikuyu use the proverb to say that women keep no secrets and seldom tell the truth.
 Women conceal all that they know not.
7. **Aka na ng'ombe itirĩ ndũgũ**
Wives and oxen have no friends.
 There are things which are not to be given to friends.
 A woman is to be from her house three times: when she is christened, married, and buried.
8. **Andũ maiganaine magĩthiĩ na magĩceera**
Men are equal when they are going and walking.
 One can notice a difference between man and man when they, 'exempli gratia', are commanding or working, but not on the road where they look quite the same.
9. **Andũ matarĩ ndundu mahũragwo na njũgũma ĩmwe**
People who have no secret agreement are beaten by a single club.
 A group of men not bound by a secret will be easily beaten by a single man.
 Lack of union spells weakness.
10. **Andũ matiũĩ ngamini**
Men do not know liberality.
 One does not give without hope of return.
11. **Andũ matiũĩ ngũ, moĩ ithendũ**
Men do not know hard firewood, but only lops.
 People put aside hard tasks and devote themselves only to easy ones.

12. Andũ me muoyo matiagaga wira

Live men do not lack work.

Life would be too smooth if it had no rubs in it.

13. Angĩmituĩria na ũmĩrĩte ndangĩmĩona rikii

He who seeks his goat with the man who ate it, is certain not to find it.

Do not look for stolen goods in the robber's house.

14. Arũme mari rwamba

Men have got quills.

Do not annoy others because they will respond by hurting.

Do evil and look for like.



15. Bata ndũbatabataga

Necessities never end.

He that will have no trouble in this world must not be born in it.



16. Cia athuri inyuagĩra thutha

The elders drink afterwards (i.e. after the others).

Elderly people are not in such a hurry as young ones.

17. Ciakorire wacũ mũgũnda

The food found Wacũ in the field.

The proverb originates in the legend of Wacũ, the most despised amongst the wives of a rich man who never

gave her any presents. One day, when a banquet was being held at home, she went to work in the field, since she knew there would be nothing for her at home.

In the middle of the banquet a raven swooped down in the courtyard where the meat was being roasted, snatched a big piece and brought it to Wacũ.

The Kikuyu use the proverb to say that God takes care of His poor.

18. Cia kionje itigayagwo gitanakua

The property of a helpless man must not be divided before his death.

The reason is that he is unable to get anything more than he already possesses.

19. Cia mūcii iri gacūgūma gacio gatathukagio nĩ mūthuri ūngĩ tiga mweneguo

Home affairs have their staff, which cannot be brandished by anyone but the head of the house.

The proverb means either that private matters must not be spoken of to strangers or that in each house there must be only one in authority.

20. Cia mūcii itiumaga ndira

Home affairs must not go into the open.

Do not wash dirty linen in public

21. Cia mūcii ti como

Home affairs cannot be told in public.

Do not wash dirty linen in public

22. Ciana cia ndigwa itirĩ maithori

The widow's sons have no tears.

It means that they have been accustomed to suffer very early.

23. Ciathanaga ikigūa, itiathanaga ikiūmbūka

Birds agree when flying down, but do not agree when flying up.

The proverb means that it is easy for a swarm of birds to alight together, while it is difficult to get up together since after eating their fill they will fly up separately. Morally the proverb means that men easily agree when deciding on an enterprise, but will probably quarrel as soon as they have obtained what they want.

24. Cia thūgūrī itiyūrāga ikūmbī

Bought things do not fill the granary.

Do not hope to become rich without cultivating your fields.

25. Ciatura ngūyū iriāga ng'umo

When there is shortage of figs, birds eat the fruits of the 'mugumo'.

The tree called 'mugumo' by the natives bears little fruits that are not eaten by birds when there is plenty of other food.

If thou hast not a capon, feed on an onion.

26. Cia ūthoni ciambāga nguhi

The buying of a wife begins from a little thing.

Great events have small beginnings.

27. Ciigwatagirira mareru

Goats fall that take hold of lichens.

Lichens are not strong enough to prevent a goat from falling. The proverb means that unsatisfactory excuses are insufficient defence.

28. Cionje ikūmi irūgītvo nī ūmwe ūrī na hinya

Ten helpless people were surpassed by a single strong person.

One strong person is better than ten helpless ones.

One grain of pepper is worth a cartload of hail.

29. Cira mūnene nī ūkīa

A long lawsuit breeds poverty.

Fools and obstinate men make lawyers rich.

30. Cira mūnene nĩ wa ũthoni ũgĩkua

The breaking-up of a betrothal is no small matter.

Marrying a girl means giving a large number of goats or cattle to her family. Starting from the day of the betrothal the price is paid gradually. Evidently it is no simple matter if the would-be husband breaks his contract and demands the return of the marriage price.

31. Cira wa kīrimũ ũtindaga kīharo

The lawsuit of a fool keeps the court (sitting) all day.

The lawsuit of a fool never comes to an end.

32. Cira wa mūciĩ ndumagīrio kīharo

Home affairs are not to be carried on in the public square.

Do not wash dirty linen in public.

33. Cira wothe wambagīrīrio na nda

Every case begins from the stomach.

The Kikuyu have an ox or a goat killed, roasted and distributed to judges at the beginning of every case. Familiarly they use the proverb to say that one of the most important jobs of life is to provide something to eat.

An empty belly hears nobody.

34. Ciunagwo rūkomo, kīmenyi akamenya ikiunwo

We speak by proverbs: he who is intelligent will understand.

Intelligenti pauca.



35. Ehera thakīrio

Clear out of the 'thakīrio'.

'Thakīrio' is the place in the Kikuyu hut where the wife stays when distributing the food to the family.

Mind your own business.



36. Gakiibatha nĩ koĩ nĩ karĩthoitha

He who spends his time adorning himself knows he is going to a dance.

There is a reason for everything.

37. Gakiihotora nĩko koĩ ũrĩa kariĩna

He who adorns himself knows to what sort of dance he is going.

There is a reason for everything.

38. Gakunywo kagĩra thooko

The fool takes many people with him.

It is said of people who, when invited to a feast, instead of going alone, take many others with them.

A fool cannot bear his own company.

39. Garũrĩra mbeũ ti ya kĩnya kĩmwe

Change seeds taking them from different calabashes.

It is good to introduce new blood.

40. Gatamĩ kari mondo yene gatingikũratira nguo

The piece of cloth that is in another's bag does not patch your garment.

41. Gathutha konagia mũndũ njĩra

A little, contemptible path is sometimes the one that leads you to the highway.

Little strokes fell great oaks.

42. Gatitũ ka mũimwo nĩ irĩ noko kari mĩti

The forest of an unpleasant (ill-liked) person is the one that has trees.

The proverb means that evil-doers often do prosper.

43. Gatitũ ka ngoro gatiunagwo

The grove of the heart is not laid open.

44. **Gatinyinyiraga gatari gakunye**
Nobody cries that has not been pinched.
 No smoke without fire.
45. **Gatuma kainagia mūrigwa**
Darkness causes to dance even him who cannot.
 All cats are the same in colour at night.
46. **Gatundu koragithirie Watatua**
A secret agreement enabled people to kill Watatua.
 Watatua was a powerful Chief, invincible in open combat, who was killed at night by a few men.
 Secret union means strength.
47. **Giathi githaragio nĩ gaka kamwe**
A market can be spoilt by one woman.
 One cloud is enough to eclipse the sun.
48. **Giathi kīri mūrugirwo**
Every feast has its guest of honour.
49. **Giathi kīriagwo nĩ kīngi**
One appointment is eaten by another.
 Today kills yesterday.
50. **Giathi kīūmū no kia mūrokero**
That of circumcision is a hard appointment.
 The Kikuyu circumcision is a civil and religious rite by which the adolescent is admitted into the public life of the tribe and becomes a man in the full possession of his rights. The ceremony is physically painful, but the candidate is expected to face the operation without wincing.
 There are no gains without pains.
51. **Gieterero ti kīinaino**
To wait is not to tremble.
 Men's actions are not to be judged at first sight.
52. **Gicegū kia andū aingi ti kīega**
The 'gicegū' of many men is not good.

'Gicegũ' is that part of the Kikuyu hut where they enclose the ram in order to fatten it.

Too many cooks spoil the broth.

53. Gicigo kia mūgūnda gitinyihaga

A piece of land is not a little thing.

The proverb means that however small the field you possess, it has its importance if you work it.

A little house well filled, a little land well tilled, a little wife well willed are great riches.

54. Giikaro kimwe kiri ngee kana ndaa

By staying always in the same place one gets lice.

The world is a great book, of which they that never stir from home read only one page.

55. Gikūrū kiega no kiratina

The only thing good, though old, is the 'mūratina'.

'Mūratina' is the fruit of the hot-dog tree (*Kigelia Etiopica*) used by the natives to cause fermentation of sugar-cane beer. It is believed that the older the fruit, the greater is its fermenting power. The proverb means that there are only few things that improve with age.

56. Gikuū gitiraragirio

You cannot (do not) make an appointment with death.

57. Githaka gitigunaga muni, kigunaga mūki

The land enriches not people who clear it, but people who come (when it is already cleared).

One beats the bush, and another catches the bird.

58. Githaka kia mūici nī gūkaana

Lying is the thief's stronghold.

59. Githūmba gitiri mūrimū wa ngoro

Beggars have no worries.

Poverty needs no granary.

60. Githūri kiri mwatū wa ngotoko

The chest contains a beehive full of pride.

The proverb means that proud people have always in store lots of reasons justifying their wickedness.

- 61. Gīṭiganīrīro kīrūgītwo nī kīrūgamanio**
Talking something over is better than leaving it pending.
 Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.
- 62. Gītiro kīa mūka wene gītikagio athiī**
The song of a stranger-woman is answered after she has gone.
 The proverb is metaphorically used to mean that foreigners, especially women, are not to be trusted too much.
 Eat a peck of salt with a man before you trust him.
- 63. Gīṭindo kīa mūciī nī kīūru**
It is bad to stay at home.
 He that stays in the valley shall never get over the hill.
- 64. Gītoī kīmenyaga kīerwo**
He who does not know, knows after being told.
 A man forewarned is forearmed.
- 65. Gītoī kīraragia kīūī njīra**
He who does not know the road delays also one that knows it.
 Who goes with a fool becomes a fool.
- 66. Gīṭonga kīgiragio iganjo gīkarīma**
The rich man cannot be prevented from cultivating the 'iganjo' he wants.
 'Iganjo' is the place upon which a hut had been built. Since the flocks live in the owner's hut, the floor of the hut becomes fertilized. The proverb refers to the fact that if a rich man has left a piece of his land to a poor man on which to build his hut, very often he wants it back as soon as the soil under the hut has been enriched by the droppings of the animals.
 Might is right.
- 67. Gīṭonga kīrīaga mūnyuko**
Rich people sometimes eat bad food.
 All is not gold that glitters.

68. **Gūceera nī kūhīga**
Travelling is learning.
 The world is a great book, of which they that never stir read only one page.
69. **Gūcekeha ti gūicūhio**
To be slim does not mean having been pared.
 Do not scorn little things.
70. **Gūciara kunaga irigū ngingo**
The woman who gives birth to a child is like the banana tree that breaks under the weight of its fruit.
 Maternity means pain to the mother.
71. **Gūciara ūru ti kwenda kwa mwene**
It is not the mother's will to have a bad offspring.
72. **Gūcukagwo ūtagūteo**
People slander somebody even if they do not despise him.
73. **Gūkiara na gūtonga ititiganaga**
Riches and poverty do not leave each other.
74. **Gūkira kūrī ngatho**
To keep one's tongue is worthy of praise.
 Silence is golden.
75. **Gūkira nī gūthūrana**
Not to talk is to hate.
 One keeps silence with people one does not like.
76. **Gūkiririria kwagira kīcha**
Indulgence breeds regret.
77. **Gūkūra nī kūūru: ngathiĩ ūrīrī ngīcayaga**
It is bad to get old, for one goes to bed grumbling.
 Old sacks want much patching.
78. **Gūkuhiriria mbaara tikuo kūrūa**
The fact that you have gone near the battle-field does not mean that you fought.

79. **Gūkungagwo ūtukū ti mūthenya**
Thieves conceal themselves in the night not in the day.
 The night is a cloak for sinners.
80. **Guota mwaki nī gūcera**
To get the warmth of fire one must stir the embers.
 No gains without pains.
81. **Guoya ūtūūragia ūkia mūcīi**
The fear (of toil) keeps your house poor.
 Idleness is the key of beggary.
82. **Gūteithagio wīteithītie**
If you help yourself you will be helped.
 God helps those who help themselves.
83. **Gūtema na kanua ti gūtema na rūhiū**
Cutting by the tongue is different from cutting by the knife.
 Slander is not mortal stabbing.
 Hard words break no bones.
84. **Gūthama nīkuo kūhika kwa arūme**
A man changing his abode is like a woman marrying.
 As a woman, on marrying, adopts the customs of the family she enters, so a man going to live in a strange country, must accept its customs.
 When in Rome do as Rome does.
85. **Gūthekererwo nī andū ti kūrīrwo nī hiti**
To be laughed at by men is not to be wept by hyenas.
 Better to be laughed at than to die.
86. **Gūthekererwo ti kūrīrwo**
To be laughed at is not to be pitied.
 One starting any enterprise ought not to fear what others say of him.
 Do well and dread no shame.
87. **Gūthekio ti kwendwo**
If anybody makes you laugh, it is not always because he loves you.
 Eat a peck of salt with a man before you trust him.

88. **Gũthigagio mbura gũtongĩtwo matũgũta**
Some hope for rain even though they have not prepared their fields.
 He who hopes for favours should have prepared himself to profit by them.
89. **Gũthii gũtigiragia mũndũ acoke**
To go does not prevent a man from returning.
 Never give up.
90. **Gũthii kuonagia mũndũ njĩra**
Travelling teaches men their way.
91. **Gũthii nĩ kuona**
Travelling is seeing.
 Travel broadens the mind.
92. **Gũthimba ti kuura**
Having rain clouds is not the same as having rain.
 Don't cry herrings till they are in the net.
93. **Gũthinga kũrũgĩte gũtonga**
Virtue is better than riches.
 Virtue is the only true nobility.
94. **Gũthinga nĩkuo kihooto**
Virtue is power.
 Virtue makes men on the earth famous, in their graves illustrious, in the heavens immortal.
95. **Gũthũra ng'ombe nĩ gũthũra kamũkwa kayo**
To despise the ox means to despise also a strip of hide from it.
 One cannot scorn great things without scorning little ones related to them.
96. **Gũthukagĩrio wanatega itega**
One favours him from whom one has in the past received a gift.
 One good turn deserves another.

97. Gũthũragwo mũndũ ũriendwo

A man is (sometimes) scorned who will be loved (later on).

Judge not of men or things at first sight.

98. Gũtirĩ gĩtatũirie kīngĩ

There is no thing which does not cause another to exist.

99. Gũtirĩ gĩthĩnji ũtathĩnja

There is no butcher that does not slaughter.

Every man to his trade.

100. Gũtirĩ gũkũra na kũrara kerĩ

One ages every night one lives.

Time fleeth away without delay.

101. Gũtirĩ ita ithiagwo na gĩtete kĩa njohĩ no gĩa ũcũrũ

No war has been fought by men carrying a calabash of 'njohĩ' but of 'ũcũrũ'.

'Njohĩ' is an inebriating drink brewed out of sugar-cane.

'Ūcũrũ' is a kind of thin porridge made by boiling millet-flour in water. This gruel is supposed to be highly nourishing and therefore suitable for long journeys or hard fighting; while the sugar-cane beer by inebriating the warriors makes them weak and easy prey to the enemy.

Out of temperance comes strength.

102. Gũtirĩ mbura ĩtarĩ na gĩtonga kiayo

There is no rain which does not enrich someone.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

103. Gũtirĩ mũciĩ ũrĩ kahĩĩ ũtakarugwo mũtwe

In every family where there is a son, the head of an ox, goat or ram is cooked to be eaten by him with his friends.

They use the proverb to mean that ordinarily a son gives his parents more trouble than a daughter, or that in every family parents do not lack troubles.

There is a black sheep in every family.

104. Gũtirĩ mũici na mũcũthĩrĩria

There is no difference between the thief and the looker-on.

105. Gūtirī mūki ũrehage ũrugarī

Nobody entering a hut pays for the heat he will enjoy in it. Only the owner of the hut had the drudgery of carrying home the firewood: the visitor does not know the cost of the fire he is enjoying. Metaphorically the proverb is used to say that he who enters a house cannot realise the troubles of the occupants.

None knows the weight of another's burden.

106. Gūtirī mūdũ ũi haria egũthii no haria ekuuma

Nobody knows where he goes, but only whence he comes.

No one can see into the future.

107. Gūtirī mūdũ wendaga gũtũngana na nyoni njũru

Nobody wants to meet an ill-omened bird.

To the Kikuyu many birds foreshadow calamity. The cry of the owl forebodes mishap. If the owl cries, perched on the top of a hut, the oldest man in that village will die very soon. If someone, about to make a journey, hears the cry of any bird of ill-omen, he must not start on any account.

Nobody seeks his own ruin.

108. Gūtirī mūdũ ũtangĩtuika wa ndigwa

There is no man that cannot become an orphan.

No flying from fate.

109. Gūtirī mūdũ wonaga wega wake, no kuonwo wonagwo

Nobody can see his own goodness: it can be seen only by others.

110. Gūtirī mūrĩo ũtainagia rūthĩa

There is no pleasure (however little it may be) that does not cause one's cheeks to tremble.

The Kikuyu consider the cheek trembling an expression of joy.

A little pleasure is nevertheless a pleasure.

111. Gūtirī mũthenya ũkĩaga ta ũngĩ

No day dawns like another.

Every day brings a new light.

112. Gūtīrī mūtumia wenjagīrwo mbuī kwa nyina

No married woman will have her white hair shaved at her mother's.

The Kikuyu girls go around with bald heads which they get periodically shaved by their relations. So the woman, who by being married has left her house and relations, will never be shaved at her mother's.

Once sold, ever sold.

113. Gutirī mwana ũngītema agītemera ithe

The son does not cut his finger in cutting meat for his father.

Sons are stingier than their parents.

114. Gūtīrī ngware itarī mūhuririe wayo

There is no partridge which does not know its own way of scratching.

As many methods as men.

115. Gūtīrī ngware nyinyi mahurīrio-inī

No partridge is small when it claws the soil.

Every one can do great good or evil according to his possibilities.

116. Gūtīrī njamba irumaga imera igīrī

No prepotent man will insult other people for two consecutive seasons.

Prepotence comes quickly to an end.

117. Gūtīrī nyama na ngirinyū

Meat has no choice morsel.

When distributing the meat or anything else one must not favour any one person.

118. Gūtīrī nyoni njega mwere-inī

There is no nice bird in the millet.

Millet is one of the staple crops of the Kikuyu. They protect it from birds by building pulpit-like huts in which boys or women stand to frighten them whilst the harvest is ripening.

Even sugar itself may spoil a good dish.

119. Gūtiri ũciaragwo ari mūgī
Nobody is born wise.
120. Gūtiri ũcokaga haria arūmūrwo kaara
Nobody returns where he got his finger bitten.
Once bitten twice shy.
121. Gūtiri ũikagia itimū atarī na haria akūratha
Nobody throws a lance if he has no target.
There is a reason for everything.
122. Gūtiri ũkinyaga mūkinyire wa ũngī
Nobody walks with another man's gait.
Every man in his way.
123. Gūtiri ũndū ũtarī kīhumo
There is nothing without a cause.
All things have a beginning.
124. Gūtiri ũrīragio nī ũtonga no ũkia
Nobody grumbles at being rich, all at being poor.
125. Gūtiri ũrīragio nī ũkia wene
Nobody cares about other people's poverty.
126. Gūtiri ũrirū ũtonwo
There is no mischance you are guaranteed against.
There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.
127. Gūtiri ũru ũtūūruga, no wega ũtūūruga
Not evil, but only the good will last.
Good deeds remain, all things else perish.
128. Gūtiri ũta utarī nyama
There is no bow without its meat.
God helps those who help themselves.
129. Gūtiri rītwa rītakūria mwana
There is no name which cannot distinguish a child.
Every bird is known by its feathers.

130. Gūtiri thingira ūciraga ta ũngi

There is no location which discusses its affairs in the same way as the other does.

Every man in his way.

131. Gūtiri ūthũire tiga akiaga

A man is poor not because he scorns possessions, but because he possesses nothing.

Sour grapes, as the fox said when he could not reach them.

132. Gūtiri wa nda na wa mūgongo

There is not the son of the front and the son of the back.

The Kikuyu mothers carry a baby on the back if they have only one. If they have two, one is carried in front and the other on the back. Of course the one carried near the breasts can suck oftener than the other. That is why they say this is the favourite one.

Parents should have no Benjamin.

133. Gūtiri wiriraga agikuuu, eriraga akiiga thi

Nobody grumbles while carrying a load, but when he has laid it down.

The proverb means that nobody hates to be rich but all hate to become poor; or that nobody refuses to command, though all are sorry when they have to give up the command.

134. Gūtiri wiriraga agithii, no agicoka

Everybody regrets not what he leaves but what he does not find (when he comes back).

135. Gūtiri wita ithe wa ũngi baba

Nobody calls another's father 'dad'.

136. Gūtirika gūteaga njamba noru

To forget a strong man who could help you is the same as to scorn him.

137. Gūtirika ni gūte

To forget is the same as to throw away.

138. Gūtungata gūtingīgiria mūndū agatungatwo
The man that serves is not prevented from being served in turn.

Every dog has its day, and every man his hour.

139. Gwakia kwarama, gwatuka gwakundeera
The day is for working, the night is for resting.

There is a time to wink as well as to see.

140. Gwethera gītahi mūka
To seek a woman to the belly.

The expression is used when they look for something to eat.

To go foraging.

141. Gwī thigari mūgambo
Some soldiers are only soldiers when talking.

A good friend is a treasure.

142. Gwīka wega kūmathaga ūngī
A good action reaps another.

One good turn deserves another.



143. Handū ha njūgūma na ha mūgwī hatiganaine
The place to use the club and the arrow are not the same.
Everything has its place.

144. Harī mūthuri hatiitangagwo maai
In the presence of elderly people one must not pour water.
Nobody is allowed to be foul-mouthed specially when elderly people are present.
Old age is honourable.

145. Haro nī ya mūka ūrī ihīi
Quarrelling is peculiar to the woman who has got male children.

They use the proverb to mean that since sons are more mischievous than daughters, and mothers are more proud of their sons than of their daughters, women are inclined to quarrel to defend or to exalt their sons.
No mother is so wicked but desires to have good children.

146. Haro nī ya mūka ūrī thirī

Quarrelling is peculiar to the woman who has debts.
A woman in debt is quarrelsome.

147. Hita itanakīra

Resist the beginnings.
Small faults indulged are little thieves that let in great.

148. Hinga ndikinyaga iraka

A wily person does not walk on dry leaves (for they would betray his presence).

149. Hinya ndūigana ūrūme

Strength does not correspond with courage.

150. Hinya ndūrī indo

Strength has nothing.
Strong people are not necessarily rich people.

151. Hiti ciathiī mbwe ciegangara

When hyenas go away jackals rejoice.
Little dogs begin to eat when big ones have eaten enough.

152. Hiti itaga iria ingi ya mūtiri

The hyena calls another hyena worse than itself.
The pot calling the kettle black.

153. Hiti yugaga arūme nī ogī, monaga gicinga ngwatiro

Hyena says that men are wise because they know how to hold a firebrand.

A story told by the Kikuyu says that one night a hyena entered a hut to eat the goats. The owner awakened by the noise, took hold of a firebrand to scare it out. The beast tried to do the same, but not knowing how to handle firebrands it scorched its paws.

There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything.

154. Hiti ndīriaga mwana, na mūi ūria iri ngoroku
The hyena does not eat its baby, and you know how insatiable it is.
 No mother is so wicked but loves her children.
155. Hūngū ireraga haria mbūri irathinjirwo
Vultures arrive at the place where the goat is slaughtered.
 Where the carcase is, the ravens will gather.
156. Hūngū igithii igūrū ndiatigire thī kūrī kwegā
The vulture perches on the trees because it does not feel sure on the ground.
157. Hūni nene igiraga hūhita
To eat much leaves you with a swollen belly.
 Enough is as good as a feast.
158. Hururu ithekaga rwaro
The abyss laughs at the plain.
 Every man thinks his own geese swans.

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159. Īciaraga ūru mwene oine
The cow has a bad delivery though her owner is present.
 Misfortunes may come in spite of watchfulness.
160. Īganagwo yaari iria yakua
The good milking cow is praised after her death.
 A friend is never known till needed.
161. Īgitunywo mwana iikagirio mūngū
The cow is given a present when her calf is carried away.
 When one thing distresses you, another consoles you.
162. Īgūkua ihuragia kīara
The ox that claws the 'kīara' will die.
 'Kīara' is the dunghill you will find in every Kikuyu

village. In order to understand the proverb it must be borne in mind that the Kikuyu regard it as a sacred place which the witch-doctor dedicates with the sacrifice of a goat to secure that the evil spirits may not return into the hut from which he expelled them. They are supposed to stay in the 'kīara' just as the rubbish does. Touch pitch and you'll be defiled.

163. Īkūrūma ndīoragia mūgūgūta

The ox that feeds itself does not spoil its skin.

164. Īkūrūra yarahūraga īmamiī

The animal rambling in the stable makes the sleeping ones rise too.

Ill examples are like contagious diseases.

165. Īkūrurio ti noru

The ram that is shown around is not fat.

A really fat ram will easily find a buyer and does not need to be carried around and shown in the markets.

Good ware makes a quick market.

166. Īreragīra rūkū-inī na ikaya kūigana

The cimex lives in the firewood and still it reaches its full growth.

Where there is a will there is a way.

167. Īrī gūciarīra riūa-inī yongithagīria o ho

The cow that drops her calf in the sun feeds it there too.

One likes the place where one does well.

168. Īrī gūkūra īriagwo iguku nī aka

The hump of the ox that has grown old must be eaten by women.

The hump is a choice morsel for young men when the ox is young. But if it is old women must eat it.

Rubbish is women's portion.

169. Īrī gūkūra ndirī mwīroreri

The ox which has grown old has no admirer.

Nobody looks after elderly people.

170. Īri gūtū ihūgagia mwene
The flea troubles him who has got it in his ear.
171. Īri kūhinja ndirī munīri ngū
Nobody gathers firewood to roast a thin goat.
 Poor people have no friends.
172. Īri kūhūma ndirī mūtī itangigwatīrīra
There is no tree which a panting animal would not cling to.
 A drowning man will catch at a straw.
173. Īri kūra ndirī mūhiti
The ox that ran away cannot be caught.
 Resist the beginnings.
174. Īri kūruga nī igūita, igūtīrīra nī nguū
The cooking pot on the fire leaks, when pouring water it is broken.
 Misfortunes come by forties.
175. Īri mūrungu igiritagia īri kahia
The ox which has no horns, relies for help on the one that has them.
 He who feels weak relies on the friend he knows is strong.
176. Īri mūthece kinya tene ndioyagira ingi
The bird who has always possessed a beak, does not pick up for another.
 Content is more than a kingdom.
177. Īri nyite nī mūtego ndithūire gwiteithūra
The animal caught in the trap does not refuse to set itself free.
 No man likes his fetters, though of gold.
178. Īri tha nī īri iria
It is he who has got milk that is merciful.
 'Milk' here has the sense of money; possessions. The proverb means that the rich should help needy people, since the poor cannot do it.

179. Īrī thoni inyuaga munju

The timid ox drinks muddy water.

He goes to the river only when others have come away leaving the water dirty.

Faint heart never won fair lady.

180. Īrūgamaga nī ikurumaga

He who goes around with his body upright, later on will go crawling.

Young today, old tomorrow.

181. Ītakuura igwatagia rūhuho

To blame the wind for the rain that does not fall.

It refers to boasting people who try to make silly excuses for themselves.

182. Ītari thahu igunagwo nī makoro ma njira

The man who has no impurity will be helped even by the peels he sees on the road.

There are many ways by which a Kikuyu can contract impurity and he fears the baneful effects which will follow it. That is why a man able to avoid all legal uncleanness is said to be so lucky.

God helps honest people.

183. Īthinjagirwo mūrwaru igakora warwarire tene

The goat slaughtered for a man who is sick now, finds another who was sick long before.

God cures and the doctor takes the fee.

184. Īthimbaga na ndiure

The sky is heavy with rain, but rain does not come.

It refers to people who are always promising great things which they never do.

Great boast, small roast.

185. Ītunyagwo mbūi nī gūciara

A plant loses its blossom as soon as it bears fruit.

Woman's beauty is spoilt by maternity.



186. Igai rīa mūtūndū rītigiragia kīrīti kiunwo

A branch of 'mūtūndū' does not hinder the division of a field.

'Mūtūndū' is a small tree growing in the bush. It is not used by the natives, except as firewood.

187. Igego rīthekagia itimū

The tooth laughs with the lance.

It means that often a person plays with his enemy.

The cat plays with the mouse.

188. Igwa njīthī itirī njohi

Young sugar-cane gives no beer.

There is no putting old heads on young shoulders.

189. Ihenya inene riunaga gikwa ihatha

Great haste breaks the yam tuber (instead of taking it out whole).

Haste trips up its own heels.

190. Ihīi na igwa ikūragira ūthū-ini

Boys and sugar-cane grow up as enemies (because boys are all the time eating sugar-cane).

191. Ihiga riega rītinganaga na thio njega

A good millstone does not meet a good miller.

Good husband and good wife seldom meet.

192. Ikinya na thī itiaganaga

The foot and the earth cannot help meeting.

193. Ikinya rīa mūkūrū rikinyaga mūrūna

Old people's walking teaches young ones to walk.

That that comes of a cat will catch mice.

194. Ikũūra inya na inyanya
One can lose four and eight.
 All covet all lose.
195. Indo ciene irĩ mūtino
Stolen things bring in misfortune.
 Ill-gotten goods seldom prosper.
196. Indo nĩ kũrĩmithanio
Riches are found in cultivating together.
 Many hands make light work.
197. Irĩaga na mbugi kũrĩ na ũgwati
The goats pasture with bells hanging from their necks in order not to stray.
198. Irĩ gũthua ndongoria itikinyagĩra nyeki
If the first goat goes lame, those that follow will not reach the pasture.
 Ill examples are like contagious diseases.
199. Irĩ gwi̯thamba iticokaga gwota mwaki
Candidates for circumcision after washing do not return to warm themselves at their father's (but go straightway to the place of the ceremony to show their courage).
 In things that must be it is good to be resolute.
200. Irĩ kanua itirĩ nda
The food that is in the mouth is not yet in the belly.
 Do not cry herrings till they are in the net.
201. Irĩ kũhĩa itioragĩrwo
When the food is cooked there is no need to wait before eating it.
202. Irĩ Ukabi itirĩ Gĩkũyũ
What is in Masai is not in Kikuyu.
 There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.

203. Irima rīrekagia riemba

The pit allows the grass to fall in.

The proverb alludes to the pits the Kikuyu used to dig for trapping wild animals. These pits were covered with sticks over which, as well as over the borders, they put a layer of grass. Since this grass often fell in the pit through the spaces between the sticks, so they say that often one falls into the pit dug by himself.

Hoist with his own petard.

204. Irimũ ikenagīra ũndũ mũru

Fools rejoice for a bad thing.

A fool will laugh when he is drowning.

205. Irio hīu itiumaga mbūri

Cooked food is not sold for goats (but is given to friends, visitors and pilgrims).

God helps the poor for the rich can help themselves.

206. Ita cia maitho ititīraga

The war of the eyes never comes to an end.

The eye is never satisfied with seeing.

207. Ita itarī ndundu ititahaga

The war that has no unity will make no prey.

208. Ithaga rīene rīnogagia ngingo

Other's ornaments tire one's neck.

Do not wear borrowed plumes.

209. Ithare riagūka gūcokaga mūgumo

When 'ithare' is uprooted 'mūgumo' grows in its place.

'Ithare' is a kind of cane growing on the river banks. The Kikuyu say it is of no use. 'Mūgumo' is a kind of fig tree (*Ficus Hochstetteri*) which does not grow except leaning on another tree or twisting around it like a creeper. This is why they think that the 'mūgumo' is worse than the 'ithare'.

210. Ithe wa thaka ndarĩ matũ

A fair daughter's father has no ears.

The father who wants to marry his daughter to the best among the young men who crowd his hut to woo her, turns a deaf ear on their foul words.

Few men will be better than their interest bids them.

211. Itherũ rĩtiringaga ini

A joke must not hit the belly.

The proverb means that there must be a limit also in joking.

The jest is tolerable, but to do harm by jest is insufferable.

212. Itherũ rĩtirutagĩrwo mũguĩ

For a jest one should not take the arrow out of the quiver.

213. Itherũ riumaga mbaara

From a jest comes a strife.

Jests, like sweetmeats, have often sour sauce.

214. Itherũ rĩũragaga ndebe

A joke can break the ear ring.

An ill-timed jest has ruined many.

215. Itherũ ti mũguĩ

A trick is not an arrow.

Good jests bite like lambs not like dogs.

216. Itonga igĩrĩ itirĩ nyoni

Two rich persons do not wish each other a bird of ill omen.

Dog will not eat dog.

217. Itonga irugaga na ngĩo

Rich people cook their food in a potsherd.

The tailor's wife is worst clad.

218. Itũũra rirĩ kanoro rĩtituhagia kahiũ

The village which has got a whetstone does not blunt the knife.

The sense of the proverb is that if in a village there is a good whetstone it does not mean that the villagers should

purposely blunt their tools in order to whet them. The time will come when the whetstone will have to be used. Every thing is good in its season.

219. Ithinjīro rītiagaga thakame

A slaughter-house is not without a little blood.

Touch pitch, and you'll be defiled.



220. Kaana ka ngarī gakunyaga ta nyina

The son of the leopard scratches like its mother.

Like father like son.

221. Kaana karere nī ūcūwe gatingīrūngika

The baby nursed by its grand-mother can never be corrected.

Too much breaks the bag.

222. Kaara kamwe gatingīyūrāgīra ndaa

One finger does not kill a louse.

Union is strength.

223. Kagwaci ka mwana wene noko kahoragia mwaki

It is always the potato of another family's boy that extinguishes the fire.

The proverb alludes to the custom of roasting potatoes in the embers of a dying fire.

Nobody calls himself rogue.

224. Kahiga gākūrū gatiagararagwo nī maaī

The stream does not pass over an old stone (through respect to its age).

Old age is honourable.

225. Kahīi ka mwathi kamenyaga kūgereka

The hunter's son knows how to hunt.

Like father, like son.

226. Kahii kogi ta ithe kabaritaga ta migwi

A son as cunning as his father knows the arrows like his father.

Like carpenter like chips.

227. Kahiũ getainwo na rwenji

A knife and a shaving-knife are alike.

The proverb means that if you do not have something you need, you will have something you can use instead.

Necessity is the mother of invention.

228. Kahiũ karathime kariaga nyama cia kīnandũ

The blessed knife (son) eats of the meat of the 'kīnandũ'.

'Kīnandũ' is a small calabash used to keep oil, fat and the best morsels of meat. They say that the father will share the contents of the 'kīnandũ' with the most beloved son.

229. Kahūniĩ gatiũĩ mwĩri

He who is full does not understand what is told (about others' troubles).

Another's burden does not worry us.

230. Kahūniĩ gatũhaga ũrĩri wa nyina

The fed baby plays on its mother's bed.

231. Kaihũ korũri gatigaga kwao gũgithinjwo

The rambling pole-cat leaves its house when there is a banquet.

The son that leaves his father's house for liberty's sake will not share his father's inheritance.

232. Kamamĩrĩria gateire mũgũnda mũrĩme

A little idleness lost a tilled field.

A little leak can sink a great ship.

233. Kamau mwerũ nĩ airaga

Kamau who is white becomes black.

'Kamau' is a typical name. The proverb means that there is nothing constant in this world.

234. Kamũhũthia kaharũrũkagia mwatũ

A little idleness causes the ruin of the beehive.

The Kikuyu hang beehives on the branches of the forest trees, and it is their custom to visit them often to make sure that they are all right. For it might happen that if out of idleness one did not see them regularly, one would ultimately find the branch broken, the beehive fallen and the contents spoilt.

235. Kamũingĩ koyaga ndĩrĩ

Many people together lift up the 'ndĩrĩ'.

'Ndĩrĩ' is a heavy wooden mortar in which the Kikuyu women, when brewing beer, crush the sugar-cane.

Many hands make light work.

236. Kanĩra njara ĩria ũkomeire

Take an oath only for the hand you slept on.

Swear only to that which you know to be true.

237. Kanoro kari itũũra gatituhagia

The whetstone in a village does not blunt the knife.

Every potter praises his own pots.

238. Kanua kariĩre mbeũ noko koragia, 'ngahanda kĩ?'

The mouth who ate the seeds asks, 'Now what shall I plant?'

He sups ill who eats up all at dinner.

239. Kanua kene gatinyuaga muma

Another's mouth cannot take the oath for you.

Every bird must hatch its own eggs.

240. Kanua ni ikahũ

The mouth is a chink.

From the mouth come many futilities.

241. Kanua kendagia kiongo

The mouth sells the head.

The tongue talks at the head's cost.

242. Kanua weriire

You spoke (against yourself) with your own mouth.

It means that one can sometimes condemn oneself in defending oneself.

243. Kanya gatune mwamũkanĩro

A small red snuff-box is a welcome.

The proverb refers to the Kikuyu custom of giving a pinch of snuff to their friends when they meet.

244. Kanyoni kabariti keminagĩra njoya

The little bird that flaps its wings too much will spoil them.

One must crawl before one can walk.

245. Kanywanjui kerathaga kero gako

'Kanywanjui' scratches its thigh.

'Kanywanjui' is a species of tiny blue bird with a long bill, which sucks nectar from flowers. The proverb means that such birds, although very small, can do everything for their own needs, and do not require others' help to have their legs scratched.

Every man something can.

246. Karagũthwo nĩko koĩ kwĩgita

He who is stricken knows how to defend himself.

Scalded cats fear even cold water.

247. Karanga hako gatiũmagia

It is not the owner, trampling his own field, that spoils it (but the others).

The proverb has arisen from the fact that many people if they have a bad harvest, say that it is the fault of other people who walked across their plantations.

Nobody calls himself a rogue.

248. Karara gekinya

A person will change his mind on something if left to sleep over it.

Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today.

- 249. Karatha gatūkagia karatha**
Prophet copies a prophet.
 Like tree like fruit.
- 250. Karatū gatagwo na kūgūrū kwa mwene**
The shoe is made for the foot that will wear it.
 If the cap fits wear it.
- 251. Karegi nyina gatihonaga**
The baby that refuses its mother's breast, will never be full.
 Faint heart never won fair lady.
- 252. Kareraria kagarūragwo na mūtī**
The sleeping dog is turned by a stick; i.e. it turns round to bite if disturbed or touched by a stick.
 Let sleeping dogs lie.
- 253. Karīki kamwe gatukīriirie ndutura kīrimū**
A stupid turtle-dove is sometimes surprised by night for wanting one more grain of castor-oil plant.
 Time stays not the fool's leisure.
- 254. Karī mata gatiagaga wa kuuga**
The mouth that has saliva does not lack words.
 The proverb means that the man who has something to say will say it.
- 255. Karī nda gatiīyumbūraga**
The word that remains in the belly does not mean anything.
 Tell the truth and shame the devil.
- 256. Kiaga ngūi kiabaca**
The song that has no leader, goes wrong.
 No longer pipe, no longer dance.
- 257. Kiama gītirūgaga rūūi**
The elders of the council do not jump over a brook.
 Metaphorically the proverb means that the elders who are to judge a case must not hurry. But it often means that a person like a judge should not do anything undignified.

258. Kiambi nda nikio giakūra

The food eaten first lasts longest in the stomach.

First impressions are most lasting.

259. Kiara kiiyūragio nī gūita ihuti

The dunghill grows by straws thrown upon it.

Every little helps.

260. Kiega ta kī gitithiraga

A really good thing is ever good.

A good tale is none the worse for being twice told.

261. Kiere kia njira-ini gitigwatagwo nī muura

A grain of millet grown on the road will bear no ears.

The proverb means both that a promiscuous woman has little hope of bearing children, and that a thing in common use will not last long.

A pot that belongs to many is ill stirred and worse boiled.

262. Kiero nī ūimbo

The thigh is a bubble.

Thigh means full blooded youth. The proverb is for the young who scorn old people or make wrong use of their strength to sin. It reminds them that youth passes quickly.

Young today, old tomorrow.

263. Kierū nī kīiraga

What is white becomes black.

The proverb originates in the fact that the Africans are almost white when they are born, but become black by growing.

There is nothing constant but change.

264. Kigina gītininūkagio irio hande itarī ngūrū

The seeds kept are not finished before the ripening of the crops planted in the field.

Every thing has its time, and that time must be watched.

265. Kihooto gītuthaga rūga rūtunge

The argument breaks the strained cord of the bow.

266. **Kihooto kigetūraga ūta mūgete**
The argument relaxes the bent bow.
267. **Kihooto kiringaga rūūi rūiyūru**
The reason crosses even a flooding river.
268. **Kihooto kiongagirirwo njūgūma**
The club is added to one's argument.
269. **Kihooto nī indo**
Having a good argument (in a discussion) is like having riches.
 The five proverbs here above mean that he who can support his views or actions with a strong argument, will go through any difficulty and obtain what he wants.
270. **Kinandū kia mūcii gītibakagwo mūgeni**
The fat of the 'kinandū' is not used to anoint a stranger.
 For the meaning of the word 'kinandū' see No. 228.
 Charity begins at home.
271. **Kindū kiene gītiri ndokeirwo nūū**
Who prospered with robbed things?
 Ill-gotten goods seldom prosper.
272. **Kindū kiūru no kirona, indī kīri rūa rwa mūhuhi**
A sore is a really bad thing; still it means luck to the doctor.
 It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.
273. **Kindū kiūru no mūdū ethūkitie we mwene**
A really bad thing is to hurt oneself wilfully.
 It is stupid to cut off your nose to spite your face.
274. **Kindū no mwene mūhoi ahoyage**
The thing you want must be begged from the owner.
 This means that it must not be acquired from other people nor taken without permission.
 It is not a sin to sell dear, but it is to make measure.
275. **Kīdong'o kīarīire mai nī ūndū wa kwaga mayū ma gūkīra**
The beetle feeds on excrement for it can't fly high.
 If thou hast not a capon, feed on an onion.

276. Kīnya kīrī itina nīkio kīigaga

Any calabash that has got a bottom can stand upright.

The proverb means that God gives every man what is required by human nature: but it depends on man to exploit such gifts.

Every man is the architect of his own fortune.

277. Kīongo kīenjithagio nī mwene

The head is shaved at its owner's desire.

Let every pedlar carry his own burden.

278. Kionje gītihoyaga njohi mīcīī īrī

An invalid does not go to two houses to ask for beer (since he cannot move).

Old age is honourable.

279. Kīrī kwīhia cīhītie ciothe

If a child has sinned all have sinned.

One does the blame, another bears the shame.

280. Kīrīro kīa mbūri nī ndara

It is the gridiron that cries (for the slaughtered goat).

Everyone rejoices when a goat is killed, for each will have his piece of meat; only the gridiron on which the meat is roasted, weeps, i.e. crackles.

281. Kīrīro kīrī itūūra gītingīreka mūndū akome

One person weeping prevents all in a village from sleeping.

One barking dog sets all the street a-barking.

282. Kīrīti kīrī ngoro gītiunanagirwo

The forest in the heart cannot be cut down by somebody else.

Troubles in somebody's heart cannot be removed by somebody else.

283. Kīrimū gītindagia andū njīra

The fool makes other people stop on the road.

The fool wastes the time of other people.

284. Kīrimū kihithaga rwembea-inī rwa nyūmba kīūi ✓
gītikuonwo

The fool hides himself under the eaves of the hut and ✓
thinks nobody will see him. ✓

It refers to foolish people who invent silly excuses to ✓
conceal their faults. ✓

285. Kīrimū gia gwīkigia kīrūgite kīa mūciarīre ✓

He who feigns to be stupid is more stupid than the stupid- ✓
born.

None so deaf as those who won't hear.

286. Kīrimū kīongaga nyina ari mūkuū

A fool can even suck the mother after she is dead.

287. Kīrimū nī ta mwatū

A fool is like a beehive.

The proverb means that he is a fool who does not look
after his own interest, like the beehive which allows
itself to be emptied.

288. Kīringiri gia aka nī rwenji rūkīrega

To force a woman to do something she doesn't like is like
forcing a blunt shaving-knife to shave.

289. Kīronda kīa mwene gītimūiragia ngoro

He who has a sore does not feel sick on account of it.

We are blind to our own faults.

290. Kīruka gia kīmbu gītithiragwo nī mūng'ūng'ūtū

All the species of the chameleon family shall always have a
protruding backbone.

That that comes of cat will catch mice.

291. Kīūma gītihtagiririo rūga

Do not force a big thread into a bead with a small hole.

Grasp all, lose all.

292. Kīūnūhu gītiriagirwo

A wasted thing cannot be eaten.

Wilful waste makes woeful want.

293. Kĩūra kīaringio rūũĩ kiugaga nĩkio kīeringia

The frog that was helped across the river, said she had crossed it by herself.

Eaten bread is soon forgotten.

294. Kirĩrĩria, thuti ti ruo

Be patient, a desire is no pain.

The proverb is told to people who long after anything they cannot obtain.

295. Kirihia thuti

Desires tie.

If your desire be endless, your cares will be so too.

296. Kiuga gĩtheri gĩtirutanagĩrwo

An empty bowl is not offered.

It means that it is better to keep silence than to try to justify oneself by empty excuses.

Be silent or speak something worth hearing.

297. Komũ ateire kaigũ wa nyina

The dry firewood does not despise the wet one coming from the same tree.

Dog will not bite dog.

298. Komũ athĩnirie kaigũ wa nyina

Mother's dry firewood laughed at the green one (and it did not think that both of them had but one common lot).

Today me, tomorrow thee.

299. Kũganwo nĩ kũra

Being praised leads to ruin.

Praise without profit puts little in the pot.

300. Kũgera mũgathĩ ti gũtinia

To tell the beads is not to cut the thread.

Do not judge men or things at first sight.

301. Kũgũrũ kũrĩ mũhu na kũrĩ ime itihanaine

A foot dirty of ashes is not a foot wet of dew (because the former holds firmly, while the latter skids).

- 302. Kūgūrū nī irata thī**
The foot goes all the world over.
 It is perseverance that prevails.
- 303. Kūgunagwo mwithiomeri ti mūthiomerwo**
It is he who speaks that profits, not he who is spoken for.
- 304. Kūgunirwo mwana no ta kūgunirwo nyina**
To make the son happy is to make the mother happy.
- 305. Kūhika nī kuuna**
Hurrying is breaking.
 Haste makes waste.
- 306. Kūhītia nī kwa njamba**
Erring is proper in a courageous person.
 To err is human.
- 307. Kūhonoka ti gūtūūra**
To pass safely through danger (once) is no guarantee (for the next time).
 One can escape the rocks and perish in the sand.
- 308. Kūhoya kwa arūme nī maitho**
Males beg with the eyes.
 It alludes to the Kikuyu custom according to which male guests, when invited to a beer party sit in the courtyard waiting for the host to pass round the drinks.
- 309. Kūhoya ti kūiya**
To beg is not to steal.
- 310. Kūhūūta na kūhūūna ititiganaga**
Hunger and surfeit do not leave each other.
 Riches have wings.
- 311. Kūhūra maaī na ndirī**
To pound the water in the mortar.
 To waste time and labour.
- 312. Kūira ti kūrita**
To be black is not to be stupid.
 Little bodies may have great souls.

313. Kūma ti kūma ta ihiga, na kuororoa ti kuororoa ta maai
To be hard does not mean to be hard as a stone, and to be soft does not mean to be soft as water.
There is a measure in all things.

314. Kūmatha gūtiri hinya ta kūramata
To harvest is not so difficult as to keep the harvest.
Keep some till more comes.

315. Kūmenya mūno nī kūmenyūka
Knowing too much is like being ignorant.
Too much breaks the bag.

316. Kūmenya werū nī kūūtinda
He knows a place who lives in it.
Every man knows his own business best.

317. Kūngū maitū na hunyū wake
Long live my mother and her ugliness.

318. Kūnyiha ti gūtinio
To become small is not the same as being cut.

319. Kūnyitwo ti kuohwo
To be caught is not to be imprisoned.
There is many a slip, 'twixt the cup and the lip.

320. Kūrī arūme na maiyūria ndua
Some are males (useful people) and some can only fill the gourds (useless people).
Some good, some bad, as sheep come to the fold.

321. Kūrī gūciara ūru ta kihia gīgiciara na mūtwe
There are women who give forth a bad issue, just like the sorghum that bears its fruit on the head (instead of growing it underground like most Kikuyu crops).

322. Kūrī gūkahūka gūticokaga ndebe
One cannot put the 'ndebe' into a broken ear-lobe.
'Ndebe' is the wooden ring put into the pierced ear-lobe

as an ornament. The painful operation of piercing the lobe is done with a wooden bodkin by the parents of the boy or girl in the years preceding the initiation. Pieces of wood are then introduced into the hole and these will successively be replaced by larger ones until a large wooden ring ('ndebe') can be put in as an ornament. The proverb means that these are things which once broken cannot be soldered.

323. Kūri gūkua mūrio ta kigwa

There are people who, like sugar cane, are killed for being sweet.

He who makes himself a sheep shall be eaten by the wolf.

324. Kūri mwoni na mūrata thi

There are lucky and unlucky people.

The wind of luck is inconstant.

325. Kūri ũkuũ ũtatumwo, ta wa nyūngũ

There are things, like the earthen pot, which if ever broken can't be repaired.

For some evils there is no remedy.

326. Kūria mbere ti gūkoroka

To eat first is not to be a glutton.

327. Kūria mūno nī kuoria nda

To eat much means to spoil one's belly.

Too much breaks the bag.

328. Kūria nai gūtigiragia mūdũ akaria wega

To eat bad food (today) does not prevent a person from having good food (tomorrow).

Change of fortune is the lot of life.

329. Kūria thi ti kūria tiri

One does not eat the soil, but the fruit thereon.

330. Kūria thiri nī kūriha

The way of eating a debt is paying it.

He that gets out of debt grows rich.

331. Kūriithia imwe ti kwenda kwa mwene
To graze only one goat is not the owner's will.
Evils come though we do not want them.

332. Kūrikanira gūtigiragia ndeto ihitane
To have come to an agreement does not mean that the agreement may not be broken.
The cat and the dog may kiss, yet are none the better friends.

333. Kūrima nī kwienda
To till the land is to love oneself.
Work is well done that is well loved.

334. Kūrita nī kūru
It is bad to be a fool.

335. Kūrūga ti kwegā, amu kīūra kioragire ūthoni na irūga
To leap is bad, since the male-frog by his leaping broke up the betrothal.

The proverb originates in the following fable. One day the male-frog went to his fiancée's home to arrange the marriage with her father. But as soon as the fiancée noticed the indecorous leaping-posture assumed by the male-frog during the conversation, she refused to marry him.

The Kikuyu tell the proverb to express their esteem for decency and modesty.

Loquacity storms the ear, but modesty takes the heart.

336. Kūrūa, kūgūrana na kūriha thiri gūtiiriragwo
Nobody feels sorry for having been circumcised, for having bought his wife and for having paid his debts.
The proverb means that there are certain things that leave no regrets.

337. Kūrūa nī kūhīa
Being circumcised is like being scalded.
This means that the pain of the circumcision is a few minutes' pain.

338. Kūrua nī kwara itara

Being circumcised is like building the 'itara'.

The 'itara' is a trellis of twigs suspended a short distance above the fire-place in the Kikuyu hut to prevent sparks from setting fire to the thatched roof. The same word is often used to mean the whole hut. Thus this proverb means that a young man as soon as circumcised, must realise that the years of irresponsibility are over and that he must see about building his hut and starting a new home.

A married man must turn his staff into a stake.

339. Ku ndiriaga

A blow does not (always) injure.

340. Kuma kwa mbaa gũthiĩ kwa heho

To come from rime and go into the bitter cold.

To fall out of the frying pan into the fire.

341. Kumagara nī kūhiga

To come out of one's house means learning.

Travel makes a wise man better.

342. Kwa Mũcũni nī gwateirwo nī mũhitũki

Mũcũni's house was ruined by the traveller.

'Mũcũni' is the name of a person who refused hospitality to a passer by. Since hospitality is traditionally sacred among the Kikuyu, they say that this traveller cursed Mũcũni's house which went to ruin.

343. Kwa mūnegeni gũkiũra, kwa mūkiri kworire tene

The house of the talkative man perished long after that of the quiet.

It is easy for somebody who is friendly to get help from others.

344. Kwa mwendwo gūtiri irima

On the way to one's beloved there are no hills.

345. Kwaria nī kwendana

Talking is loving one another.

Friendship increases by visiting friends.

346. Kwaria ti gũcaya
To talk is not to grumble.
347. Kwaria ti gũtua cira
To talk is not to decide.
348. Kwigeria mũcii nĩ kwigeria mathĩna
To start a family is to start troubles.
When a man is married his troubles begin.
349. Kwigita ti guoya
To prepare is not to be afraid.
Let him that wants peace prepare for war.
350. Kwionera ti kwirwo
To see for one's self is different from being told.
Words are but wind, but seeing is believing.
351. Kuona kimeru ti kũria
To see the crop in the fields is not to eat it.
There is many a slip, 'twixt the cup and the lip.



352. Maaĩ maraitika matiri mũhitire
Spilt water has nobody to collect it.
It is no use crying over spilt milk.
353. Maaĩ mararu timo mahiũ
Lukewarm water is not hot water.
354. Maciara maingi nĩ mbirira nyingi
Many births mean many burials.
The proverb means that in the family where there are many children one must expect many griefs too; and that people who run many businesses must also expect many reverses.
Much coin much care.

355. Mageria nomo mahota

Trials mean successes.

Where there is a will there is a way.

356. Maguta makūrū matinaga rwĩmbo

Old fat sings no song.

This means that he who goes to dance does not anoint himself with rancid fat. The word 'fat' is used for 'beauty, youth'. The proverb means that old folks cannot have admirers as young ones; that old people cannot hope to have more children.

Water run by, will not turn a mill.

357. Maguta mambagio ũthiũ

The smearing begins on one's face.

Actually the Kikuyu who smear themselves very often, always begin the anointing on the face, and laugh at people who begin on any other part of the body.

There is a time and a way for all things.

358. Maheni mari mūtino

Lies are dangerous.

Liars have short wings.

359. Maheni ti thiri

Lies are no debt.

360. Maitho ma andũ matiendaga kīndũ kihĩnju

Men's eyes do not like to see anything thin.

The proverb refers to children, oxen and goats.

361. Maitho ma arũme ti ma irang'a

Men's eyes are not the eyes of the 'irang'a'.

'Irang'a' is an insect with very tiny eyes. The proverb means that the eyes of this insect see very little, while men's eyes see everything.

362. Maitho ma arũme ti mambo

Men's eyes are not like the 'mambo'.

'Mambo' are the holes the Kikuyu make in the hides for fastening them to the ground when they dry them in the sun.

- 363. Maitho ma ciūra matigiragia ng'ombe inyue**
The eyes of frogs do not prevent cattle from drinking.
 Do what thou ought, let come what may.
- 364. Maitho maronana marī nduīro**
The eyes which see each other are destined to see each other again.
 Friendship increases by visiting friends.
- 365. Maithori ti rūthiomi**
Tears are no language.
 Tears, idle tears.
- 366. Marakara ma arūme matitūūraga ta ma aka**
Men's anger does not last so long as women's.
 Women are as prone to revenge injuries as men to forgive them.
- 367. Marakara nī gītei**
Getting into rage means being proud.
- 368. Marī mbere matirutaga nyota**
Run-by water does not quench the thirst.
 Water run by, will not turn a mill.
- 369. Matarī maku mahītūkaga ūgīkūnja itūma**
The water that is not yours flows away while you are folding the 'itūma'.
 'Itūma' is the leaf of a kind of edible arum. Out of these large leaves the Kikuyu used to drink water.
- 370. Mathanwa marī kīondo kīmwe matiagaga gūkomorania**
Many axes in one basket must hit against each other.
- 371. Matienda mwako mendaga mūrugūrio**
Some people do not like the building of a hut, though they like the 'mūrugūrio'.
 'Mūrugūrio' is a kind of dedication-ceremony held by the witch-doctor to solemnize the completion of a new hut. On such occasion the owner of the hut distributes beer to his relations and to the people who assisted him in the building.
 There is scarcity of friendship but not of friends.

372. Matigana nomo moranwo
They who leave one another forget one another.
 Out of sight, out of mind.
373. Matirũka nĩ maingĩ kũrũga magũa
Slips outnumber falls.
 Every slip is not a fall.
374. Matukũ nĩ ngũrĩrĩrĩ
Days pass quickly.
 Time fleeth away without delay.
375. Matukũ nĩ thĩgo
The days are a hurry, i.e. go quickly.
 Time fleeth away without delay.
376. Matukũ ti ma kiumia
Not all days are Sundays.
 Christmas comes but once a year.
377. Matumbĩ ma njamba matitũranaga
The eggs of males do not hatch each other.
 The proverb means both that any man prefers living with a woman rather than with another man, and that there ought not to be two people commanding in one home.
 Two sparrows upon one ear of wheat cannot agree.
378. Maũndũ nĩ ndiganĩro
The important things are left in the locker.
 In other words, they are not told to everybody.
 Tell not all you know.
379. Mba yakwa irĩhagwo na ingĩ
My stolen or damaged lamb must be replaced by another.
 An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
380. Mbaara ti ũcũrũ
War is not porridge.

381. Mbaara ya aka ndirĩ ng'ondũ

Women's strife has no sheep.

According to the Kikuyu custom the one that wounds another in a quarrel must pay a sheep as a fine. The proverb means that in women's strifes nobody incurs such a fine, for their quarrels are usually words only.

Words are for women, actions for men.

382. Mbarĩ ya ngeka makorirwo matarĩ meka

They who said 'I shall do' became people who had done nothing.

Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.

383. Mbia iminaga ndarwa na igutha

The mouse finishes the hide by gnawing.

Little strokes fell great oaks.

384. Mbere ndiriragwo ta thutha

The future is not so much regretted as the past.

385. Mbere nĩ gikeno thutha nĩ maithori

Tears follow joy.

386. Mbere no mbere thutha no mũgiano

Before is before: afterwards there is nothing but repining.

Resist the beginnings.

387. Mbogo nyingĩ itirĩ nyama

Many buffaloes are no meat.

If you run after two hares, you will catch neither.

388. Mbũĩ nyinyi ndirĩ munge

A small flower has no smell.

A little barrel can give but little meal.

389. Mbũri igucagio nĩ mũnyũ

The goat is attracted by salt.

The bait not the hook catches the fish.

390. Mbũri itiugagirwo mbu

No alarm is shouted for a goat (because it is not a dangerous beast).

Do not waste time and money on unworthy things.

391. Mbūri na kaana itirumagwo

The goat and the child are not insulted (because they cannot defend themselves).

392. Mbūri ya mai ndīremaga

One can always find the goat to pay the penalty for having defecated in another's house.

According to Kikuyu customs he who defecates in another's house is liable to be fined a goat. The proverb means that he who incurred such penalty will contrive to find the means to pay it.

Necessity sharpens industry.

393. Mbūri ya rwagatha ndikiraga

A chattering goat does not keep its tongue.

The word 'goat' is here used instead of 'people'.

A fool may ask more questions in an hour than a wise man can answer in seven years.

394. Mbūri yene mūitha nī gūtū

The best part of another's goat is the ear.

The proverb means that a stranger coming in when a slaughtered goat is distributed, must not expect to be given a choice morsel, but rather an inferior part like an ear. Metaphorically the proverb means that a prudent person keeps for himself and his family the best parts of anything instead of giving them away to his visitors and friends.

Charity begins at home.

395. Mbūri ndīa mūhu ndīngīrigaria

The goat which eats ashes does not hide its habit.

The Kikuyu live under the same roof as their animals. So if any goat forms the habit of leaving its place and coming to lick ashes at the fire, it will soon be discovered. In the same manner the vices of the wicked will soon be known.

396. Mbūri ngūrū ndītihagīra tūhū

An old goat does not sneeze without cause.

The proverb means that old folks speak the truth and do not speak without a reason.

Old dogs bark not for nothing.

397. Mbūri ti marigū

Goats are not bananas (which are given for nothing).

There are no gains without pains.

398. Mbūri ya ngia yaringirira no ũguo bata ũringagirira

When the poor man's goat is about to kid, then the need drops also.

The proverb means that if a man rejoices because his goat is going to kid and so increase his property, a sudden need might force him to sell his goat.

Count not your chickens before they be hatched.

399. Mbu ya arūme itikagio nī athamaki

Men's alarm-shouts are answered by the elders.

The proverb means that if the alarm is shouted only by women one can make light of it; but if the alarm is cried by men there exists a real danger. Metaphorically the proverb means that women cannot claim any right of discussing or giving evidence in a court.

Let women spin and not preach.

400. Mbugi ndikīrite mūriha

The bell needs its tongue.

In this proverb the word 'bell' means 'woman', and 'tongue' means 'man'.

Wives must be had, be they good or bad.

401. Mburungo nyinyi irī mūthiomeri irūgite nene itari mūthiomeri

A trifle well presented becomes more precious than a thing of great value badly presented.

It is not the value of a gift that matters but the intentions of the giver.

- 402. Me haraya matirutaga nyota**
A distant water does not quench one's thirst.
- 403. Menya wigerere ndūkore**
Be not too proud lest you ruin yourself.
- 404. Miano nditukanagio no kanua**
The 'miano' cannot be confused, but the mouth can.
 'Miano' are the small gourds used by witch-doctors to contain the divining stones. The proverb means that the divining stones cannot fail to tell the truth, though it may happen that the witch-doctor does not tell it.
 God cures and the doctor takes the fee.
- 405. Migambo ni miruki ya ngoro**
The words are the odour of the heart.
 The tongue ever turns to the aching tooth.
- 406. Migũgũta iri ndiambanagirio**
Two hides are not laid out at the same time.
 One cannot be in two places at once.
- 407. Migũire ya ngũ na ya migogo ti imwe**
The fall of branches and that of big trees are not the same.
- 408. Mihehũ yongagirirwo gũkunga**
Speaking in a whisper is followed by hiding (in order to steal).
 The proverb means that people who whisper are probably arranging something evil.
 Beware of a silent dog and still water.
- 409. Mitheko itari githimi yumaga kanua-ini ka irimũ**
Laugh without measure comes out of fools' mouths.
 The laughter of fools.
- 410. Mondo ti thegi**
One's pocket is not a repository (in which all people can put their hands).
 Pocket means in this case home affairs.
 Scald not your lips in another man's pottage.

- 411. Mondo yene ndũikagio njara**
The hand has not to be put into another's pocket.
 Scald not your lips in another man's pottage.
- 412. Mũbatari ndaconokaga**
He who is in necessity does not feel ashamed (to ask for help).
- 413. Mũcakwe ũgũithagia njamba**
A cob of maize can knock down a giant.
 A small leak will sink a great ship.
- 414. Mũcangacangi onaga mũguongo**
It is he who travels that finds the tusk.
 God helps those who help themselves.
- 415. Mũcarĩ ũrutagwo ndũgũ-inĩ**
Yaws is caught through friendship.
 The proverb means that just as the disease is contracted by contact with infected people, so bad habits are acquired by consorting with bad people.
 Who keeps company with a wolf will learn to howl.
- 416. Mũcaria ũngĩ ndamwagaga**
He who looks for another must find him.
 He who will seek may find.
- 417. Mũceera na mũkũndũ akũndũkaga taguo**
He who walks with a mangy man becomes mangy.
 He who keeps company with a wolf will learn to howl.
- 418. Mũciari arĩ tha**
Parents are merciful.
- 419. Mũciari ndairagio ngoro nĩ kĩmira kĩa mwana wake**
Parents do not feel sick when wiping the mucus from their child's nose.
- 420. Mũciari ndathikũragia igwa itina**
Parents do not take away the earth that covers the root of the sugar cane.
 As a good farmer does not uncover the roots of the

sugar cane lest it may dry, so good parents have a limit also in punishing their children.

421. Mūciari nī etiagīra

Parents are proud of their children.

422. Mūciī ndwathagwo nī ūtawakire

The house is not ruled by him that did not build it.

Mind your own business.

423. Mūciī nī kūraro ūraragwo, ndūtindagwo

The house is for sleeping in by night, not for staying in by day.

There is a time for all things.

424. Mūciī ūrī mbūri ndwagaga kihuno

The house which has goats does not lack miscarriages.

Who has land, has war.

425. Mūcingū mūnene unaga hiti kūgūrū

The strong smell (of roasting meat) causes the hyena to break its leg.

Hasty climbers have sudden falls.

426. Mūciriri kirimū ndaigaga mūthigi thī

He who advises a fool does not lay down his 'mūthigi'.

'Mūthigi' is the staff of the elders.

427. Mūciri ūmwe ndagambaga

One man alone in a tribunal can say nothing, i.e. can take no decision.

428. Mūcukani ndari mūciī mwegā

A slanderer has no peaceful home.

Slander flings stones at itself.

429. Mūgambo ūrī kūgūa thī nduoyagwo; woyagwo na ūngi

A word that has fallen to the ground cannot be picked up: it is picked up by another.

Time and words can never be recalled.

430. Mūgambo ūroigwo ndugūkagwo

A word given must not be retaken.

431. Mūgariūra igiri ndagaga imwe icura

He that broils two maize cobs (at the same time) burns one of them.

Who hunts two hares leaves one and loses the other.

432. Mūgathi ūri gūtwika ndūcokaga mūigana

A broken necklace cannot be made whole again.

A broken friendship may be soldered, but will never be sound.

433. Mūgathi wa kuona ūteaga wa mwene

The necklace found makes you lose your own, too.

Ill-gotten things seldom prosper.

434. Mūgeni amiaga mbirira

The foreigner evacuates in the cemetery (for he does not know the place and its customs).

435. Mūgeni kirimū ndarugagirwo njohi

One does not give any beer to a foolish visitor.

The proverb means both that it is not honourable for the host to give hospitality to a fool, and that it is silly to give beer to a fool since he does not enjoy it.

He is not the fool that the fool is, but he that with the fools deals.

436. Mūgeni ndahūhitaga

A guest does not eat as much as he wants; i.e. he must not be greedy.

437. Mūgeni nī rūūi

The guest is like a river, i.e. he passes quickly.

Fish and guests smell at three days old.

438. Mūgethi ūtukū agethire kiri muura

He who harvests by night, reaps chaff.

There is a time for all things.

439. Mūgi nī mwire

He who has been advised is wise.

A man forewarned is forearmed.

- 440. Mũgiri rwa kũnyitũra agĩrĩre rwa kũnyitia**
One can cause the illness which he wanted to cure.
 The cure may be worse than the disease.
- 441. Mũgiti ndagaga rũhara**
He who irritates will be scratched.
 Let sleeping dogs lie.
- 442. Mũgogo ũmwe ndũhingaga iriũko**
One trunk does not close a river.
 One flower makes no garland.
- 443. Mũgoma mũrũngu nĩ ũtũraga nyũngũ**
The she-sheep can break the cooking pot, and still she has no horn.
 Cooking pot means here an affair of great importance.
 The meaning of the proverb is that a fool can spoil wise people's affairs.
- 444. Mũgũnda ũraga na rũtere**
A field begins to become a wilderness from a side; i.e. from a small place.
 A little neglect may breed a great mischief.
- 445. Mũgũnda wa mwere ũmenyagwo na ngetho**
One knows a field of millet from its crop.
 The tree is known by its fruits.
- 446. Mũgũnda wene ndũinagwo**
Another's field is not praised.
 The proverb refers to the fact that the Kikuyu when they are drunk imagine themselves very rich, and so become proud of others' riches.
- 447. Mũgũrĩra hakuhi nĩ ta aheo**
The man who buys something at a place near by is like the man who is given something.
 That is little esteemed that costs little.
- 448. Mũguĩ ũtarĩ wa awa nĩ ũkũndembũrĩra thiaka**
The arrow which is not my father's, pierces my quiver.
 Ill gotten goods seldom prosper.

- 449. Mūhaka na ciake itimuragia thakame**
He who pays another with his own things, does not bleed.
 The proverb means that one spends his money willingly when he needs help.
- 450. Mūhakana na ciake itimūragira**
He who stands close to his things does not lose them.
 The master's eye makes the horse fat.
- 451. Mūhaki ndarī hiū igīrī**
The messenger of peace has no two knives (presents).
 Messengers should neither be beheaded nor hanged.
- 452. Mūhandi tiwe mūrīi**
He who plants is not he who eats.
 Man proposes, God disposes.
- 453. Mūharwo nīwe ūthingataga gīthaka**
The one with diarrhoea must look for a bush.
 Let him that is cold blow the coal.
- 454. Mūhehwo na matū merī ndaiguaga**
He who is spoken to at both ears does not understand.
 Too much consulting confounds.
- 455. Mūhenania ndathekaga**
A liar does not laugh (for if a liar laughs when he tells a lie he is not believed).
- 456. Mūhenia ago oigaga mūrimū ūrī gūthira**
He who would deceive the witch-doctors says that his illness is finished.
 Hide nothing from thy minister, physician and lawyer.
- 457. Mūhenio arī matukū kūrī mūhenania**
The deceived has many more days than the deceiver.
 Liars have short wings.
- 458. Mūhenio ti mūgī ta mūhenania**
The deceived is not so cunning as the deceiver.
- 459. Mūheo ndagathimaga**
He who receives must not measure.
 Do not look a gift horse in the mouth.

460. **Mũhikana na kũria ahĩkanaga na gũitwo**
He who takes his food in a hurry, is also choked in a hurry.
 Haste makes waste.
461. **Mũhiki ariaga rūbia**
He who hastens eats money; i.e. wastes his money.
 Haste makes waste.
462. **Mũhiki atumaga rwerũ**
He who is in hurry sews a garment (whereas he should mend the old one).
 Haste is waste.
463. **Mũhiriga ti mũhirigo**
A clan is not a wall (which can be destroyed).
 The Kikuyu are very keen on keeping distinction between one clan and the other. That is why they say that clan-distinction cannot be cancelled.
464. **Mũhoreri ndarĩ ngũĩ**
He who is quiet has no troubles.
465. **Mũhotwo ndararaga kīharo**
He that has been beaten in a quarrel does not sleep in the court-yard.
 Scalded cats fear even cold water.
466. **Mũhũũnu etaga ũhũtĩĩ mũkoroku**
He who is surfeited calls the hungry one glutton.
 It is easy preaching to the fasting with a full belly.
467. **Mũici athamagia mũrogi**
The thief makes the poisoner change his residence.
 The proverb comes from the following story. A witch-doctor intended to poison a thief. But the thief always managed to steal the poison and the witch-doctor had to find a fresh home.
468. **Mũici na kihĩĩ atigaga kieha kiarua**
He who robbed in company with a boy, will live in fear until the boy is circumcised.
 What children hear at home soon flies abroad.

469. Mũici na mũndũ mũka atigaga kīeha akua

He who robbed in company with a woman, will live in fear until she dies (for a woman cannot keep a secret).

Woman conceals only what she knows not.

470. Mũici ndathiragwo nĩ marĩ hĩndĩ

The thief cannot keep fit, because his stools contain undigested food.

The proverb means that a thief, who eats his food in a hurry and with the fear of being caught, cannot enjoy good health.

Ill-gotten things seldom prosper.

471. Mũici ũrĩ hunyũ arindagĩra ũrĩ maguta

An ugly thief is more likely to be caught than one smeared with fat: i.e. carefully dressed.

The proverb means that a robber who cannot dissemble will soon be discovered, while the thief who can sham, will continue to flourish.

472. Mũici ũtarĩ mũnyite nĩ mũria gake

The thief who has not been caught eats of his own.

The proverb means that stolen goods belong to the thief if he is not caught.

473. Mũici wa mũthenya nĩ oio, na wa ũtukũ nĩ oio

He who robs in the day is known, and he who robs in the night is known, too.

What is done by night appears by day.

474. Mũigua ũthekagĩra cong'e

The big thorn laughs at the small one.

The greatest thieves punish the little ones.

475. Mũihwa ndahoyaga na ndaimagwo

A cousin does not ask and is not refused anything (because he is a member of the kindred).

476. Mũihwa ndaimagwo rũnyeni

A cousin is not denied a meal.

Both proverbs mean: Charity begins at home.

477. **Mũikarania na kũimba ndagaga maithori**
He who stays near a corpse cannot help weeping.
478. **Mũikaranio nĩguo mũbarano**
To stay together is to know each other.
479. **Mũikari mũtĩ gĩtina nĩwe ũĩ kĩrĩa thambo ĩriaga**
He who stays at the foot of the tree knows what 'thambo' eat.
'Thambo' are the black ants which live and nest on the trees. The proverb means that nobody knows the affairs of a home, society, etc. better than he who lives or has a part in it.
Every man knows his own business best.
480. **Mũikari na hunyũ ndakoragwo onete maguta akarega kwĩhaka**
He who is ugly, is not so because he refused to smear himself with fat (but rather because he had no fat to smear himself with).
We are but what God made us.
481. **Mũikia ndoĩ mwehereri**
He that shoots an arrow does not know whom he will hit.
You know not where a stone may light.
482. **Mũimwo nĩ irĩ ndatũũraga**
He on whom fortune has frowned cannot live long.
483. **Mũingatwo na kihooto ndacokaga**
The man overwhelmed by another's arguments does not return to discuss matters.
Once bitten, twice shy.
484. **Mũinũki kwao ndatukagĩrwo**
He who keeps good hours is not surprised by night.
Early to bed, early to rise, make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
485. **Mũka mũcangacangi ndagaga mwana**
A woman that hangs about does not lack children.
The proverb refers to the married women who, failing to have children of their husbands', go around looking for other men.

486. Mũka mūkũrũ acokagĩrĩwo na gĩkuũ

One returns to the old wife when the young one dies.

Half a loaf is better than no bread.

487. Mũka ũrĩ kĩronda ainagĩra gĩtiro ihũgo

The woman who has a sore dances on the outskirts.

A guilty conscience needs no accuser.

488. Mũka urĩ mwana ndoraga

The woman who has children does not desert her home.

489. Mũka wa mwathi ahingaga na kũgũrũ etereire kĩguru-mũki oke

The hunter's wife, awaiting her husband's return, closes the door only with her foot; i.e. she leaves the door unbolted so that her husband may enter more quickly with his prey.

490. Mũkarĩre nĩ ũmwe no mũrarĩre ti ũmwe

To stay together is not the same as to have the same type of life.

People often agree in words but not in judgement.

491. Mũkagera mahoro ma ndũgĩra

You will pass through the ear-holes.

The Kikuyu pierce the lobes and the upper part of their ears to put wooden sticks in the holes as an ornament. They use this proverb referring to people attempting to perform impossibilities.

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

492. Mũkami tiwe mũnyiti njaũ

He that milks is not he that holds the calf.

Every man to his own job.

493. Mũkarĩ aimaga ũhũnĩ

The miser denies food to him who is surfeited.

The proverb refers to stingy people who deny some help to others who would in turn be the most helpful.

494. Mũũkiri tene ainũkaga tene

He who gets up early returns early.

The early bird catches the worm.

495. Mũkũrira gĩthũnũ ndamenyagwo

He who ages in the 'gĩthũnũ' is not known by other people how old he is.

'Gĩthũnũ' is a dormitory where unmarried people sleep. The proverb means that he who has not hut and no wife, will age without having children to tell him how old he is.

496. Mũkũrũ, gaya, ũnyonie mũgaire

Old man, divide, and teach me how to divide.

This proverb shows how the Kikuyu respected old people, to whom was left the distribution of meat, beer, etc. at all gatherings.

Old age is honourable.

497. Mũkwithia arĩ itigi kũrĩ mũthatĩ

The woman whose sons have died is richer than a barren woman.

498. Mũmbi arugaga na ngĩo

The pot-maker cooks in a potsherd.

The tailor's wife is worst clad.

499. Mũmeni mũndũ ũngĩ amwĩtaga kĩongo kĩa njaũ

He who despises another man, calls him 'head of calf'.

Owing to their esteem for oxen, it is not dishonourable for the Kikuyu to be told he has a head as big as that of an ox. But it is shameful to be called 'head of calf' since the calf is a useless animal.

500. Mũmeni ũngĩ amũrutaga mbakĩ iniũrũ

He who despises another steals even the snuff from his nose; i.e. has no respect for him.

501. Mũndũ ageraga maimwo, ndageraga maheo

Man counts what he is refused, not what he is given.

We are more mindful of injuries than benefits.

- 502. Mündũ mũgĩ ndarĩ mũhere wa ũhoro**
A wise man does not need to be told a thing twice.
 A word is enough to the wise.
- 503. Mündũ mũgo nderagũragĩra**
The witch-doctor cannot do for himself what he does for others.
- 504. Mündũ mũgo wa gwithokia ndarĩ rũa**
The witch-doctor who goes to see a patient without being sent for, will not have the hide of the slaughtered goat; i.e. will have no reward.
 Give neither counsel nor salt till you are asked for it.
- 505. Mündũ mũgo wa itũũra ndagaga**
The witch-doctor of the place is not needed.
 Never a prophet was valued in his own country.
- 506. Mündũ mũka na igũrũ itimenyagĩrwo**
Woman and sky cannot be understood.
 Woman, wind and fortune are ever changing.
- 507. Mündũ mũka ndoragagwo**
A woman must not be killed.
 The reasons for this proverb are the facts that the woman is too weak to defend herself and that only the woman can produce children.
- 508. Mündũ mũka ndatũmagwo thirĩ-inĩ**
A woman is not sent to collect debts.
 Let women spin and not preach.
- 509. Mündũ mũigwa nĩ mũhootani**
The obedient man gets through.
 Do what thou ought and dread no shame.
- 510. Mündũ mũrũme nĩ wa karũgĩ**
Men act promptly.
- 511. Mündũ ũrakanyũira nĩwe ũĩ karĩ rita**
He that has drunk once, knows that to drink is a pleasure;

i.e. he who has experienced something knows whether it is good or bad.

Experience is the father of wisdom.

512. Mũndũ ũrĩ na ũndũ otaga mwaki na riũa

The man who warms himself at the fire while the sun is shining, does so for some reason.

513. Mũndũ ũtarĩ mbũri ndendaga nyama

People who have no goat do not desire meat.

'Sour grapes,' as the fox said when he could not reach them.

514. Mũndũ ũtathiaga athĩnjaga mwatĩ atoĩ ndũrũme ĩrĩ gĩcegũ

He that does not travel slaughters the she-goat as he is ignorant of a ram in his fold; i.e. he is stupid.

515. Mũndũ ũtathiaga oĩ no nyina ũrugaga

He that does not travel knows only his mother's cooking.

Both the proverbs mean that he that does not leave his native place will have a very limited knowledge.

The world is a great book, of which they who never stir from home read only one page.

516. Mũndũ wa rurugi ourugagwo akerwo nĩwe wourugana

He who is wont to provoke others, is called a provoker even when he is provoked.

A liar is not believed when he speaks the truth.

517. Mũndwithia rĩmwe ndagacoka kũndwithia rĩngĩ

He who has circumcised me once does not return to do it again.

The proverb means that he who has erred or has been cheated once, becomes wise and will not be cheated a second time.

He who stumbles twice over one stone deserves to break his shins.

518. Mũnua ũmwe nĩ ũgarũragĩrwo

One mouth must be changed; i.e. it is not good to talk always with the same person nor about the same things.

Change of pasture makes fat calves.

519. Mũnyaka nĩ ũnyakūkagwo

Fortune passes.

When fortune smiles take the advantage.

520. Mũnyaka ũrĩ mbere ya kahinga

Fortune is beyond the bush; i.e. the obstacle.

He that endures overcomes.

521. Mũnyaka ndũrokaga

Fortune is not a thing that must surely come.

Fortune is not of every day.

522. Mũnyotu athiaga rūĩ

He who is thirsty goes to the river.

Let him that is cold blow the coal.

523. Mūra na mūdũ ti mūra na hiti

To be robbed by a person is different from being robbed by a hyena.

The proverb means that if you were robbed by a person, you can hope to be recompensed for the damage; but if a member of your family or a head of your herd has been stolen by a hyena, there is no hope of redress.

There are injuries beyond redress.

524. Mūrangani ndakayaga, no mūragwo ũkayaga

It is not the killer that moans, but the killed.

525. Mũregi akĩrwo ndaregaga akĩhetwo

He who refuses (to do something) when asked, does not refuse when forced.

526. Mũregi gwathwo ndangĩhota gwathana

He who refuses to obey cannot command.

He that knows not how to obey, knows not how to command.

527. Mũremwo nĩ ndũgo oigaga nja irĩ mahiga

He that cannot dance says that the yard is stony.

A bad workman complains of his tools.

528. Mūrī kūria ta athi a thatũ

Sometimes one eats bad food like the hunters when they are out hunting in the misty season.

The proverb comes from the fact that hunters, who stay in the forest or in the plain for rather a long time must often be content with cold, raw food.

When bread is wanting, oaten cakes are excellent.

529. Mūrĩa na gatĩ ndoĩ mūrĩa na kaara nĩ akũhĩa

He who eats with a stick does not know that he who eats with the fingers gets scalded.

530. Mūrĩa ngime nĩ ũrĩ mũkimĩri

He who eats cooked food has someone who cooks it for him.

The proverb means that he who desires a thing sufficiently either can easily have it, or will make efforts to get it.

Nothing is impossible to a willing mind.

531. Mūrĩa njĩthĩ yake ndarũndagwo

He is not condemned who eats even unripe maize of his own fields.

Every man is a king in his own house.

532. Mūrĩa wiki akuaga wiki

He who eats alone dies alone.

533. Mūrĩmĩrwo nĩ ithe ndoĩ indo irĩ bata

He who has his fields tilled by his father, does not know that things are precious.

What costs little is little esteemed.

534. Mūrĩmi ndoinagwo guoko

One must not break the arm of him who tills the fields.

Do not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

535. Mūrĩmi ũmwe ndaiyũragia ikũmbĩ

One tiller does not fill the granary.

Union is strength.

536. Mūrĩmi tiwe mūrĩi

He that tills the earth is not he that eats (its fruits).

537. Mūrio ndūminaga ng'aragu

Sweetness does not satisfy hunger.

The proverb means that pleasures do not quench the thirst for many more pleasures. But it is also used when we should say:

'Sweet words butter no parsnips.'

538. Mūrio ndūnenganagīrwo

Pleasure cannot be communicated.

The proverb means that he who has any reason for rejoicing, cannot feel unhappy even if his friends or neighbours are grieved.

539. Mūrio ndūtūūraga ta ngatho

Pleasure does not last so much as gratitude.

The proverb means that few virtues are as great as gratitude and that few joys are greater than that of being thanked for a service.

Gratitude surpasses all other virtues.

540. Mūrio nī wīriagīra

*Sweetness eats up itself
and*

541. Mūrio ūgīraga kīeha

Sweetness brings sorrow.

Pleasure stings even though it pleases.

542. Mūrio ūminaga magego

Sweetness spoils teeth.

543. Mūrio ūrutaga hūngū mūtī igūrū

Sweetness makes the vulture descend from the tree.

Beauty draws more than oxen.

544. Mūrio wa njohi nī ūrīūkagwo, no wa indo ndūrīūkagwo

The drunkenness of beer passes away, but the drunkenness of wealth lasts forever.

Avarice increases with wealth.

545. Mūria rūnene ndarūrīagīra

He who asks too much will not eat anything.

All covet, all lose.

546. Mūriganio ūrī tha

They who live together must be merciful.

Bear and forbear is good philosophy.

547. Mūrimū ndūrī hinya ūgītonya mwīrī ta ūkiuma

Illness enters the body with less difficulty than it meets on going away.

Misfortunes come on wing and depart on foot.

548. Mūrimū wa mūcoka nīguo ūragaga mūdū

It is the illness that returns that kills people.

Resist the beginnings.

549. Mūrogi tiwe mūrogori

The poisoner cannot stop the effect of the poison.

The proverb refers to the superstition by which a person who has been poisoned cannot go to his poisoner to have the effect of poison neutralized by his arts but must go to another person, who is called 'mūrogori'.

550. Mūrōri arūga mūrīmi

He who looks at another's field sees many more weeds than does its owner.

To be blind to one's own faults.

551. Mūrūgīri arūme ndagaga ngiha

He who cooks food for men, does not lack big veins, i.e. bruises.

The proverb means that he who works for a master must do his duty to avoid punishment.

Men like facts not words.

552. Mūrūngūru wa njamba ūtahaga na ime

He who rises early skips in the dew.

The proverb means that people who get up early finish their work early.

The early bird catches the worm.

553. Mūrurī ndwakaga

The 'mūrurī' does not build.

'Mūrurī' is a forest tree with beautiful red flowers, but yielding very poor timber.

All is not gold that glitters.

554. Mūrwithia arūme aarī kihīi

He who circumcises the boy was a boy, too.

555. Mūrwithia arūme nī arwithagio

He who circumcises the males was circumcised.

The child is father of the man.

556. Mūtego ti ngoro, nī wathi warera

It is not the trap that counts, but the art of trapping.

A good archer is known by his aim, not his arrows.

557. Mūteng'erania na mūteng'erio gūtiri ūtanogaga

Both he that chases and he that is chased become tired.

Everyone has his own troubles.

558. Mūthakwa wa athi ndūthiragwo nī gīcanjara

The 'mūthakwa-tree' will not discontinue to produce branches of only one shape.

Like father like son.

559. Mūthamaki ūterwo ti mūthamaki

The wise man who is not taught is not a wise man.

560. Mūthīnio nī kuona arūga mūthīnio nī wagi

He who is troubled by having (property) is better off than he who is troubled by poverty.

561. Mūthiirwo ūgo-inī no ūria arirwo

He who sends somebody to a witch-doctor on his behalf must believe all he is told.

562. Mūthiganwo nī ūri nja ndahonokaga

He who is sought by a man already in the courtyard, has no way of escape.

To understand this proverb one must bear in mind that

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573. Mũthũri mũndũ tiwe Ngai

He that dislikes a person—is he God?

The proverb means that if anyone is hated by men, he is not necessarily hated also by God.

God is just.

574. Mũthua ngoro ti mũthua kũgũrũ

He that is lame of heart—unlike him that is lame of foot—cannot be recognized.

All is not gold that glitters.

575. Mũthuri ũtari kahĩ niwe wiriragĩra ngururu

The married man who has no son goes himself to scare away the birds from his harvest.

576. Mũti mũmũ ndũciaraga mũigũ

A dried up tree does not bear a green one.

One cannot get blood out of a stone.

577. Mũti ũgũagĩra mũndũ ũrĩ hakuhĩ

The tree falls on the man who stands by it.

578. Mũti ũtagũtemwo ndũgerekagĩririo ithanwa

A tree which is not intended to be felled, is not aimed at with an axe.

It is told of people who, devoting themselves to many things at the same time, finish none.

Jack of all trades and master of none.

579. Mũtiga mwahũ akoraga igima

He who leaves a bunch of bananas finds a whole stalk.

Give and spend, and God will send.

580. Mũtigwo iganjo ndagaga gĩa kuoya

The man left where there was once a hut, will certainly find something.

581. Mũtiga njerũ akoraga njerũ

He who leaves a white goat will meet another of the same colour.

Contentment is above wealth.

582. Mūtino ũrutaga mündũ ũrĩrĩ
Danger makes a man rise from bed.
 Men in danger need no spur.
583. Mūtino ũthatagia ndigĩrĩrĩ
Misfortune frustrates one's plans.
 Man proposes, God disposes.
584. Mūtirima wa kīrimũ wītirimagia na mūgĩ
A fool's walking-stick helps the wise man to stand.
 The proverb means that wise people know how to get
 profit from things that a fool thinks useless.
 A wise man gets learning from those who have none themselves.
585. Mūtũũrĩ mũno ndagaga
*He who lives a long time (in one place) must find what he
 wants.*
586. Mūtumia angikũra atarĩ mwana ndangĩona mūtahĩrĩ maaĩ
*The woman that gets old without bearing a child, will
 have nobody to draw water for her, i.e. will have nobody
 to help her.*
 Children are poor men's riches.
587. Mūtumia na kionje nĩ ũndũ ũmwe
A woman and an invalid man are the same thing.
 Words for women, actions for men.
588. Mutumia ndatũraga mūtwe na ndaikagia ndahi ndua
*A woman does not split the head (of the slaughtered goat)
 nor dip the cup into the beer (because both are men's jobs).*
 Let women spin and not preach.
589. Mūturi tiwe mūhurutĩrĩ
*He that hands the hammer is not the same as the man who
 pulls the bellows.*
 You cannot drink and whistle at the same time.
590. Mūtumumu ndonagia ũrĩa ũngĩ njĩra
A blind man does not show another the way.
 Blind does not lead blind.

591. Mūtwari ndarī ūhorō

He who carries an embassy has no concern in it.

Messengers should neither be beheaded nor hanged.

592. Mūtwe ūmwe ndwatūrāga ng'ūndū

Only one head does not divide a field.

Four eyes see more than two.

593. Mūtwe wa mūndū ūmwe nī ithino

One man's head is a solitary place.

Counsel is not of one.

594. Mugi ndoi ūria akerwo

He who speaks does not know what others will reply.

595. Mūmagari onaga ūnene

He who travels sees great things.

The world is a great book, of which they who never stir from home read only one page.

596. Muni kirīti nīwe ūī ūria thīna ūigana wa mīgogo na nyamū

It is the forest clearer who knows the troubles caused by trunks and animals.

Every man knows his own business best.

597. Mumi na nja oyaga mara kana anyuaga twirī

He that enters a hut either picks up the bowels or drinks twice.

To understand the proverb one must remember that the Kikuyu huts receive the only scanty light from the low front door. So people who enter a hut where a banquet is being held may either be unlucky and take hold of a piece of bowel instead of a piece of good meat, or may be lucky and be given a couple of drinks.

598. Mwaga gūkua mwaruta mbaara

It is they who have not died in war that start it.

599. Mwagi maguta oigaga hūnyū nī ūmwe na maguta

He that lacks fat says ugliness is the same as beauty.

600. Mwagi maguta oigaga atĩ kīng'arũ nĩ ũndũ ũmwe na maguta

He who has no fat (to smear himself with) says that ochre is as good.

In both these proverbs 'fat' means 'beauty'.

'Sour grapes,' as the fox said, when he could not reach them.

601. Mwaki ndũhoragio na mwaki

Fire is not extinguished by fire.

Fire is not to be quenched with tow.

602. Mwambi nacio tiwe mũrigia nacio

He that begins, is not he that finishes.

Judge not of men or things at first sight.

603. Mwamũkĩri ndairaga ngoro

He who receives does not loathe.

A gift horse should not be looked in the mouth.

604. Mwana mũkũrũ na ithe nĩ hamwe

The eldest son and the father are one thing.

The proverb means that after the father's death the eldest son rules.

605. Mwana mwega no nda

Only the belly is a good (lucky) child (for its owner takes care of it and never lets it empty).

The belly is the commanding part of the body.

606. Mwana mwende ndoi kũinia thũmbĩ

The son most loved (by his parents) does not know how to shake his feather head-dress.

The proverb alludes to the initiation rite, on which occasion a special head-dress composed of ostrich feathers is worn by the candidates. It means that often the young man for whom the parents have bought a costly head-dress so that he may look well, does not show any gratitude by wearing it proudly.

Things got easily are not appreciated.

607. Mwana ndaheanagwo

The child is not given away without a price.

The proverb is used especially by a father to the young man wanting to marry his daughter. It must be borne in mind that the Kikuyu girl is not given to her husband, but she is bought by him.

No gains without pains.

608. Mwana ndahūrāgwo ithe arī ho

The son is not beaten when the father is near.

609. Mwana ndetāgia ithe nyama

The son need not ask his father for a piece of meat (for a parent spontaneously gives his children the best food).

610. Mwana ūrī kīo ndagaga mūthambia

A child who likes work does not lack one to wash him, i.e. to take care of him.

God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.

611. Mwana ūrī Mūreri ndatangaga mai

The baby that has some one to care for it does not dirty itself.

Young and old age complete each other.

612. Mwana wa ndigwa nīwe ūī kwīrera

An orphan knows how to make shift with it (for he has nobody to help him).

613. Mwana wa ngarī akunyaga ta nyina

The baby leopard scratches like its mother.

Like father, like son.

614. Mwana wa ngoriai ndekagīra njingiri kūgūrū

The orphan boy wears no rattles on his feet.

The Kikuyu used to wear rattles on their feet when dancing.

615. Mwana wa rwendo ariaga nyina na ithe

The son of love eats his father and mother.

The proverb has the obvious meaning that the son who

realizes he is his parent's Benjamin gives them most trouble. But it also means that the child born of illegitimate love will soon become a nuisance to his parents.

To nourish a viper in one's bosom.

616. Mwana wa thahu ndatigaga kiriro

The son of sin does not cease weeping.

Sins and debts are always more than we think them to be.

617. Mwana wĩ na ithe ndanyuaga muma

The son, whose father is still alive, takes no oath (for his father defends him and if necessary, takes the oath instead of the son).

618. Mwanake nĩ kienyũ kĩa Ngai

The youth is a part of the Divinity.

The proverb originates in the fact that the circumcised Kikuyu youth is greatly respected by women and uncircumcised young men.

619. Mwanake wĩ na indo ndoihanaga

The youth who has enough to buy his girl, need not beseech her.

Money is the sinew of love as well of war.

620. Mwaniki ambe eanike

He who airs something must air himself first.

No gains without pains.

621. Mwarĩ mwega ahitũkĩra thome wa ngĩa

A fair girl does not stop at a poor youth's (for he could not buy her).

622. Mwarĩ mwerũ ndaragũragĩrwo

One does not consult the witch-doctor about a white daughter.

It is luck for Kikuyu parents to have a daughter with skin whiter than the average. Such a girl will be sold dearer to her husband.

623. Mwaria ciene arigagwo nĩ ciake

He who talks about others' affairs does not know his own.

624. Mwatũ ndwĩragĩrwo mwana

A boy is not sent to collect the honey (for he does not know how to collect it).

Every man does his own business best.

625. Mwatũkĩria kī? Aca no thũmbĩ na rūhuho

What have you that we have not? Nothing but 'thũmbĩ' and wind.

'Thũmbĩ' is the piece of cloth or leather used to fasten ostrich and other birds' feathers around the head.

The proverb means, 'There is no news'.

626. Mwathwo nĩ nda arũgĩte mwathwo nĩ ithe

Being ruled by one's stomach is better than being ruled by one's father.

627. Mwega nĩ ongagwo

Good people are sucked.

Cover yourself with honey and the flies will attack you.

628. Mwendi gatungu nĩ mwenjeri

He that wants to become rich must till the earth.

Sleeping foxes catch no poultry.

629. Mwendi irura nĩ mũcini

He who wants papyrus-ashes burns papyrus.

Previous to the advent of Europeans, the Kikuyu used papyrus-ashes, which are supposed to be rich in sodium, for cooking purposes.

Let him that is cold blow coal.

630. Mwendi mũhirĩga ũtuĩkane etagia rūrĩmĩ na mbere ndarũriaga

He who wants to cause disagreement within the clan asks for the tongue (of the slaughtered goat) which he was not wont to eat before.

The tongue of the goat is a choice morsel which belongs by right to the head of the family or clan. The proverb means that he who wants a pretext for quarrelling, asks for something which he cannot be given.

631. Mwendi ūru nĩ awonaga
He who seeks evil finds it.
632. Mwendi ūthaka ndacayaga
He who wants beauty does not complain (if it costs him some pain).
 No gains without pains.
633. Mwendia nĩ agūraga
He who sells buys.
 To buy and to sell are both business.
634. Mwendwo ndarĩ ngarari
He who is loved receives no refusal.
635. Mwenjani mīkuri ndoĩ ūngĩ
The barber who shaves badly does not know any other (better) way of shaving.
 The first degree of folly is to think himself wise, the second is to tell others so, the third is to despise all counsel.
636. Mwere mwega ūmenyagwo na ngetho
The good millet is known at the harvest time.
 A tree is known by its fruit.
637. Mwetereri ariaga ya mūgwato
He who waits gets the best food, i.e. the biggest potato, the sweetest maize, etc. and can eat better cooked food.
638. Mwīcarīria ndarĩ karo gatuhu
He who wants to dig out a potato does not use a blunt pole.
 The proverb means that he who wants to accomplish something, uses just those means that ensure success.
639. Mwigerekanio wateire kīūra matina
The frog that compared itself to the ox lost its buttocks.
 There is a fable, that a frog seeing what big buttocks the ox had, thought it could grow as big by swelling. But it burst and so lost buttocks and life.
 All covet, all lose.

640. Mwigerero wa ngoro ndūkinyaga no wa Ngai ūkinyaga
What man wants does not reach the goal, only what God wants reaches it.

Man proposes, God disposes.

641. Mwigito ti guoya
Self defence is not fear.

Weapons bode peace.

642. Mwīigananio ti wa mweri
To obtain what one wants is not a month's job.

Time and straw make medlars ripe.

643. Mwīikaria ndarī haro
He who lives alone has no quarrel.

It takes two to make a quarrel.

644. Mwīikaria ndarī rūruto
He who looks after his own business has no trouble.

645. Mwinyamaria ndarī ikwa nyūmū
He who has no patience will have no hard yams.
Yams are fully ripe only when they have grown hard.
So he who wants to eat a good yam must be patient and wait till it is hard.

Everything is good in its season.

646. Mwīrī tī icoya atī nī ūgūtembūka
One's body is not a banana leaf which should be rent.
The proverb is told to people who threaten to abuse or have abused others.

647. Mwīrī ūrī thakame gūtiri ūtarwaraga
The body which has blood cannot help being subject to illness.

They who would not suffer in this world should not be born in it.

648. Mwīrihiria niwe mūru
He who revenges himself is bad.

In taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over he is superior.

649. Mwitaari ndarī ūthū

He who takes counsel only from himself meets no hatred.

650. Mwithīnia ndathīnūkaga, no mūthīnio nī athīnūkaga

He who is the cause of his own troubles never comes to the end of them; but he who is troubled by others does.

651. Mwoni ūmūthī tiwe mwoni rūciū

He who sees today does not see tomorrow.

Today thee, tomorrow me.



652. Narua, mūgogo ūtanatendera

Haste, before the trunk-bridge becomes slippery.

It must be borne in mind that native bridges consist mostly of only one trunk spanning the two banks of the river. Hence passing on such bridges in wet weather is dangerous.

653. Nda īmwe yumaga mūici na mūrogi

The same womb gives birth to a thief and a poisoner.

654. Nda īrūgite ita

The belly is more important than war.

655. Nda ti mūtwe

The belly is not a head.

Into the head you can put as many things as you know without filling it, but you cannot do the same with your belly.

656. Ndakūrama kīnganga nawe wanama kīngware?

I gave you the beauty of a guinea fowl and you give me the beauty of a francolin.

The proverb originates in the following fable. Once

upon a time the guinea fowl wanting to go to dance, called upon the francolin to have its feathers dressed. The francolin, hoping to have the same favour returned by the guinea fowl, assented. But the latter taking as an excuse of its laziness that the dance was about to begin, left the other bird in the lurch. This is why the guinea fowl has now got much finer plumage than the francolin. To do good to the ungrateful is to throw rose-water into the sea.

657. Ndaregirwo nĩ ikere ta njagathi ikĩregwo nĩ guoya

I have got no calves as lizards have got no hair.

Well shaped calves are supposed by the Kikuyu to add a great deal to one's beauty: therefore they are much appreciated.

As poor as a church mouse.

658. Ndathi ndikũraga

The arrow does not age (although it be often used).

Good bees never turn to drones.

659. Ndaya ikinyia

The long road arrives (at the goal).

The proverb means that a long but sure way, is better than a short but dangerous one.

Fair and softly goes far in a day.

660. Ndegwa nyinyi ihaicaga ng'ombe na mĩtwe

The young bull mounts the cows from the head.

Young is the goose that will not eat oats.

661. Ndeto itimataga ta iria

Sentences do not curdle like milk.

Words and feathers are tossed by the wind.

662. Ndeto njega nĩ iria njĩrane

Good words are those spoken of common accord.

The proverb means both:

'Friendship is friendship and business is business'

and

'A word is enough to the wise'.

663. Ndia kahora ĩgiaga gũkameria

The animal that eats slowly can swallow well.

He that goes softly, goes safely.

664. Ndiakagwo na ya wakini

Nobody is forced to build his hut on the pattern of his 'wakini'.

'Wakini' is a person circumcised at the same time—somebody of the same age-group.

Every one to his own taste.

665. Ndiani ndikinyaga iraka

The thief does not tread on dry leaves (for they would betray his presence).

666. Ndiambaga na magua

The bee does not begin with the comb.

A good beginning makes a good ending.

667. Ndĩgũre: Konyũ kegũra nĩ komirie ikwa

Humble yourself: the inhabitants of Konyu were able to grow the yams after humbling themselves.

The proverb originates in the legend that the people of Konyu, a place in Kikuyu country, who had been at war with their neighbours of Mathira, ceased to be raided and could till their fields in peace, only by submitting.

He makes a good war that makes a good peace.

668. Ndikũraga na migiria

The ox does not become old with strong muscles.

The proverb means that man cannot expect to age and to retain the vigour of his youth.

669. Ndirĩ ndiĩyũragĩra kũria ikũgaragario

The mortar is not filled with juice in the place where it is rolled.

The proverb means that anything is found useful only in that place and by those people who are in need of it.

Everything is good in its own season.

670. Ndīrī njega ndiringanaga na mūthī mwegā

A good mortar never meets a good pestle.

The proverb means that a good wife rarely meets a good husband and vice versa.

671. Ndia ngiri yanina andū

Still water has finished many men.

Beware of a silent dog and still water.

672. Ndikwenda wīngwatirire ta kīcha

I do not want you to stick on to me like beard moss (sticks on the tree).

Live and let live.

673. Ndithūire mūnyoni ta mūnyānīriri

I do not hate him who sees me so much as him who reveals me, i.e. my faults.

Nobody is willing to acknowledge he is in fault.

674. Nditikū na magūmī, o kūrīa mūgaitanīrira

Nditikū and Magūmī (go) to the place where you can agree.

'Nditikū and Magūmī' are metaphorical names used to mean two quarrelsome people. The proverb is told to disagreeable people, who though warned do not stop their strife.

He that cuts himself willingly deserves no balsam.

675. Ndiunikaga thondu

It is not the meagre (but the fat) ox that breaks its leg.

Misfortunes seldom come alone.

676. Ndonga nanu irūgītvo nī mūkārī

A rich evil-doer is worse than a miser

677. Ndonga imwe ndihingaga iriūko

One rich man cannot close the ford; i.e. cannot do all he would.

No living man all things can.

678. Ndūgate kūgūrū ta Nyakīnyua

Do not give your foot the position which 'Nyakīnyua' gives.

'Nyakīnyua' is used to mean old women, who often sit unbecomingly.

679. Ndūgīra na kaigwa kayo

Every little hole of the ear has its little thorn.

The Kikuyu used to put little sticks or thorns in the pierced upper part of the ear.

Every sparrow to its ear of wheat.

680. Ndūgetange ta kihia kia mūcai

Do not torment yourself as you torment the seeds of the broom-tree (which you scatter everywhere without any regard).

681. Ndūgū irutagwo njira

Friendship begins with meeting at a road.

682. Ndūgū nī makinya

Friendship is steps, i.e. it consists in going to see one another.

Friendship consists in visiting friends.

683. Ndūgū nyingī ithatagia mūhuko

Many friends make one's pocket empty.

Friends are pick-pockets.

684. Ndūgū ya mwana imatagio nī nyina

The friendship of the son is strengthened by his mother.

Children's joys are parents' joys.

685. Ndūire nyiki ta mūrogi

I live alone like a poisoner.

The proverb illustrates the Kikuyu's dislike for poisoners and wizards.

686. Ndūirio nī mata ta thua

I live on saliva like a flea.

To live from hand to mouth.

687. Ndūkagerekanie gikuũ na toro

Do not compare death with sleep (because they are not the same).

688. Ndūkamenyithie wa itara

Do not make home affairs known.

Do not wash dirty linen in public.

689. Ndūkanine ndūma mbira

Do not finish the small 'ndūma'.

'Ndūma' are the tubers of an edible arum much cultivated in Kikuyu. The proverb means that one must dig out only the big tubers and leave the small ones to grow new plants.

Enjoy the present but think also of the future.

690. Ndūkanūmīre ta njūũ na ngigĩ

Do not follow me as the 'njūũ' follow the locusts.

'Njūũ' is the name of a kind of passerine bird, which follows locusts to feed on them.

God deliver you from a false friend.

691. Ndūra ĩciaraga mūigwa

The 'ndūra' gives forth nothing but thorns.

'Ndūra' is the name of a thorny tree. The proverb means:

One cannot gather figs from thistles.

692. Nduma ndihītithagia mūgĩa mbere

Darkness shows no wrong path to him who gets what he wants before dark.

Early to bed, early to rise, make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

693. Ndumumu ndionagia ĩngĩ njĩra

A blind man does not show another blind man the way.

Do the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?

694. **Ndundu ya nyina na mwana ndiiringagirio**

It is not fair to attempt to penetrate mother and son's secrets.

695. **Ndurumo igiri itiguanaga ikigamba**

Two noisy waterfalls cannot agree (in their tune).

Two of a trade seldom agree.

696. **Ndutura irumaga irorete gitara kiayo**

The turtle-dove coos when it has seen its nest.

Every bird likes its own nest best.

697. **Ni hiti mūgambire**

It is the hyena that howls.

The proverb is applied to boisterous people.

Barking dogs seldom bite.

698. **Ni itumaga na itirue**

One can sing the song which precedes the circumcision and not be circumcised.

Man proposes, God disposes.

699. **Ni mūiguanite ta gikwa na mūkūnggā**

You agree like the yam and the tree to which it clings.

To be like David and Jonathan.

700. **Ni gūkaga mūkira mwite**

Somebody may come in higher in dignity than he who was firstly invited.

The proverb has almost the same meaning as the words of the Gospel: 'When thou art invited to a wedding sit not down in the first seats at the table, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him'; etc.

Humility often gains more than pride.

701. **Ni ngingo itindaga iri theri ti nda**

It is the neck that stays without ornament, but not the belly (without food).

702. Ngaita itiriāgīrwo kwenda

The 'ngaita' is not eaten unless there is reason.

'Ngaita' is the very bitter fruit of a shrub, which is taken as an anthelmintic.

Medicines are not meat to live on.

703. Ng'aragu ya mūdū ūngī ndīngigiria ngome

Other people's hunger does not hinder me from sleeping.

704. Ngarari nī githūria kīa mbaara

Arguments are the source of strifes.

It takes two to make a quarrel.

705. Ngarari nī kamena

Discord breeds scorn.

706. Ngari ndioi gūkunya nī kuonio yonirio

The leopard did not know how to seize its prey: it was taught.

The Kikuyu say that when the leopard began to kill goats, it did not know how to seize them to kill. One day frightened by the shepherd, it had to leave its prey badly wounded though not killed. From the tree where it had taken refuge it heard the shepherd say: "What luck! Had my goat been seized by the neck, it would be already dead".

707. Ngatho ithingatagio ingi

One kindness prepares for another.

One good turn deserves another.

708. Ngatia ciathiī hiti cīeragara

When lions have gone, hyenas dance.

When the cat is away, the mice will play.

709. Ngemi ciumaga ndirī-inī

The woman's trills are shouted at the mortar.

The proverb refers to the songs and shouts of the women crushing the sugar cane to be brewed; and means that such songs are sung only on that occasion.

Everything has its time.

710. Ng'enda thi ndiagaga mūtegi

The animal that treads on the earth may find its trapper.

The proverb means:

'To err is human'.

711. Ngĩa na mūigwa itikomaga

The poor and the thorn do not sleep.

The former, say the Kikuyu, is kept awake by his anxieties whilst the latter is always on the alert in order to sting anyone who happens to touch it.

Poverty breeds strife.

712. Ngĩa yethagwo mūkuha wayo

The poor man is robbed even of his awl.

The poor man turns his cake, and another comes and takes it away.

713. Ngi imwe yoragia mūgūgūta

One fly spoils an ox-hide.

A little leak will sink a great ship.

714. Ngi ndirī rūga

The fly has no sinew.

You cannot make a silk purse from a sow's ear.

715. Ngi irathagwo ūigana mūkiha ūria iri naguo

The fly is bled proportionately to its veins.

If you squeeze a cork, you will get but little juice.

716. Ngingo ndikiraga mūtwe

The neck does not grow above the head.

Everything to its place.

717. Ngingo ya mūrīa-ng'ūrū nī gīthitū na rūrigi

The neck of him who sells too dear, is all amulets and necklaces (for nobody buys from him).

All covet, all lose.

718. Ng'ombe itionagwo nī ithayo

Oxen are not found through laziness.

Laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes it.

719. Ng'ombe yahithio njaũ ikamagĩrwo ikaya
When the cow is left to the care of a man who is not the owner, the calves are suckled only when they cry.
 Look to the cow, and the sow, and the wheat mow, and all will be well now.
720. Ngoro irĩrĩgĩ kĩa ikwenda
The heart eats what it likes.
 Love is blind.
721. Ngoro nĩ mĩrũ wa nyina na mũndũ
Every man's brother is his heart.
 Few hearts that are not double, few tongues that are not cloves.
722. Ngoro nĩ mĩtĩtũ mĩtumanu na ndũngĩtonyeka nĩ mũndũ
The heart is a thick forest which cannot be penetrated by anybody.
 What is in one's heart man's eyes see not.
723. Ngoro ndĩrumaga tũhũ
The heart does not curse for nothing.
 The proverb means that one does not repine nor swear at another without a reason.
 Everything has its reason.
724. Ngoro itũmũalire ta njĩra
Hearts do not meet (converge) like roads.
 Eat a peck of salt with a man before you trust him.
725. Ngũgũtũ ya gwithurĩra ndĩrĩ gacere
The beads one has chosen have no imperfection.
 Every man thinks his own geese swans.
726. Ngũkũ ya maguta nĩ iikagĩrio
(Even) drinking liquid fat comes to an end.
 Liquid fat of animals is esteemed a dainty by the Kikuyu.
 All good things come to an end.
727. Ngũngũni ireragira rũkũ-inĩ
The bedbug prospers on a piece of wood.
 There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

728. Ngūri ndigayagwo
The beard-pincers are not inherited.
 It must be remembered that the Kikuyu do not shave but pull out the beard with pincers forged by native blacksmiths. The proverb means that there are some things which are so personal that the father does not bequeath them to his son: he has to get his own.
729. Ngumo ndigana mwene
The fame is never up to its owner's merit.
 He that doth good for praise only, meriteth but a puff of wind.
730. Nguo njega ndiikagio rūtamī
To good clothes no ornament is added.
 Good coral needs no colouring.
731. Ngwa mbere ti noru ta ngwa thutha
The first fall is not as bad as the second fall.
 Every man's tale is good till another's be told.
732. Ngwaci itigathagwo rienjero
Potatoes are not praised when they are dug out (but when they are eaten).
 The proof of the pudding is in the eating.
733. Ngware ikirara mūtī igūrū ndiatigiro ~~chi~~ kūrī kwegā
The francolin sleeps on a tree because it is not all right on the ground (and on a tree it feels safer).
 Everyone knows his own business best.
734. Ngware ndiūrāgagīrwo nja
The francolin is not killed in the courtyard.
 According to Kikuyu superstition to kill a francolin found on one's courtyard brings in misfortune. If anybody has done it, he must slaughter a goat to propitiate the spirits. There is a measure in all things.
735. Ngware nyinyi irī na mūhurīrie wayo
The little francolin has its way of scratching.
 Every man his way.

736. Njamba ĩgũaga na ĩngĩ

A hero dies with the other.

The proverb refers to the days of war before the advent of Europeans, when warriors went together to plunder and were bound to win or to die together.

737. Njamba ĩmwe ndĩhingaga iriũko

One strong man only cannot close the ford of a river.

No living man all things can.

738. Njamba ndĩriagwo nĩ wĩra

A strong man is not overpowered by his task.

He that endures is not overcome.

739. Njamba ndĩrumaga imera ĩgĩrĩ

A powerful man does not domineer two seasons.

Nothing that is violent is permanent.

740. Njamba nĩ ithaga rĩa rika

A strong man is the ornament of his age-group.

741. Njamba ti ikere

Strength does not dwell in the calves of the legs.

The proverb means that one's strength does not dwell in one's appearance, but rather in mind and virtue.

742. Njaũ ĩrĩ ndoge nyina nĩ ndoge

If the calf has been poisoned, also its mother has been (for they ordinarily eat the same food).

Like father, like son.

743. Njeterera ndĩkinyaga

He who waits does not arrive.

Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.

744. 'Njika na njika' ndĩrĩ marũrũ

'Do to me and do to me' have no bitterness.

The proverb means that a person cannot complain on receiving from others the same kind of treatment as he had given to them.

745. Njira ndiraga mūgendi 'hurūka'

The road never says to the traveller, 'Take a rest'.

746. Njira nguhī no ya ūrīrī

A short way is only the way to bed.

The proverb is told when one wants to cut short a discussion, or when one wants a whole night to reflect before making up one's mind.

Consult with your pillow.

747. Njogu ndiremagwo nī mīguongo yayo

The elephant is not overpowered by its tusks.

748. Njohi nī gacuhūra

The beer is a thing that unties (the tongue).

When the wine is in the wit is out.

749. Njoya na mūthece ndioyagīra īngī

A bird that picks food with the beak does not collect food for another bird.

750. Njūki ndīrī mboora igīrī

The bee has not got two stings.

The proverb is told to greedy people, who when given something are not satisfied and want more.

Much wants more.

751. Njūgūma ya njamba ithukagīrio ūgeni-inī

A strong man's club is tested by foreigners.

The proverb means that it is foreigners who actually test the strength of a man, for they dare measure themselves with him. Whilst the people who live with him, judging his strength as a thing beyond any doubt, are afraid of testing it.

The proof of a pudding is in the eating.

752. Njukū irūgīte rūūī rūiyūru

Slander is worse than a river in flood.

The most dangerous of wild beasts is a slanderer, of tame ones a flatterer.

753. Njukũ nĩ migathĩ ya itonga

Calumnies are (as plentiful as) rich people's beads.

754. Nyamũ ngũrũ ndihatagwo maaĩ

An old ox is not refused water.

Old age is honourable.

755. Nyama njũru iroragwo na kanua

Bad meat is tasted with the mouth.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

756. Nyamacũcũ, kanua nĩ koinagirwo ithĩgĩ

Woman, remember that the mouth is sometimes covered with a branch.

A woman cannot keep a secret.

757. Nyanja ĩmwe ndĩtiragia itega

One gourd (of beer) does not stop the gift.

The Kikuyu used to send their relations and friends presents of native beer in gourds. The proverb means that the breaking of one gourd in transit does not prevent the delivery of the others.

758. Nyanja nguhi nditegaga

A short gourd (of beer) is not given as a present.

A slight gift, small thanks.

759. Nyeki ya nja ndirikaga

The grass of the courtyard is not eaten.

The proverb means that oxen do not eat the grass growing near their pen, for they know it has been fertilized with their droppings. But the oxen which come from another pen and have no reason for loathing such good pasture feed on it with delight. The proverb is applied to the girls who ordinarily are not loved by the young men of their village, to whom the girls of other places look handsomer.

Never a prophet was valued in his own country.

760. Nyitira na nginyirira ti imwe
To possess and to send for is not the same.
 There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.
761. Nyoko nditugaga
Beauty does no good.
 Beauty may have fair leaves, yet bitter fruit.
762. Nyoneka narua yūraga narua
What is found quickly, is quickly lost.
 Quick come, quick lost.
763. Nyoni kīrimū yakaga irigū ikūrū igūrū itoi riatemwo
The foolish bird nests on an old banana tree and does not know that it will be cut down.
 A fool always comes short of his reckoning.
764. Nyoni yakaga nyūmba na mūthece ūmwe
The bird makes its nest only with one beak.
 God never sends mouths but He sends meat.
765. Nyota wa gīkuū ndūnyotokagwo
Death's thirst is never quenched.
 There is no medicine against death.
766. Nyūmba ikihia mwene ni otaga
If the hut burns, its owner gets warm.
767. Nyūmba irindagira magothe
The house covers many things.
 There is not always good cheer where the chimney smokes.
768. Nyūmba na rika itiūmagwo
The clan and 'rika' cannot be cancelled.
 People initiated in a particular season are banded together in an age-group and are said to be of the same 'rika'. They are supposed to be obliged to help one another, like the members of the same clan.
769. Nyūmba ndigukumagio ikūmbi
A granary cannot be pushed into a hut.
 Don't bite off more than you can chew.

770. Nyũmba nyinyi ĩciraga ũtukũ

The little house discusses its affairs by night (because they are not worth discussion by day with waste of time).

771. Nyũmba nyinyi yoragana yathama, yoragwo yathama

If a member of a small family is killed or kills another, the family moves (since it may be unable to defend itself).

772. Nyũngũ irugaga na ndĩrĩe

The pot cooks the food and does not eat it.

Bees that make honey, do not taste it.

773. Nyũngũ ya gana ndĩmeraga

A rotten gourd seed does not germinate.

Immoral people seldom get offspring.

774. Nyũngũ ya maguta ndĩkuaga

The pot in which fat is stored does not break (for it is well fed).

775. Nyũngũ ya mũingĩ ndĩagaga mũteng'ũri

The cooking pot from which many people await their food, does not lack him who takes it from the fire.

In like way, the problem in which many people are interested, will have one able to solve it.



776. O mũndũ athondekaga ũrĩrĩ wake

Every man makes up his own bed.

Every bird must hatch its own eggs.

777. O mũndũ ahuragia mwaki na mwihĩrito wake

Every man scratches in his fire and in his 'mwihirito'.

'Mwihĩrito' is the space between any two of the three stones of the Kikuyu hearth.

Everyone should sweep before his own door.



778. Rīgu ndūtwaranagio

The food which one takes as provision for one's journey, is not carried by another person.

Take heed is a good read.

779. Riri nda rikuaga ūnene

The foetus which is in the womb carries the future.

The Kikuyu use this proverb to mean that only God knows the future, just as only God causes a foetus to be a male or a female.

The future is in the hands of God.

780. Ritwa nī mbokio

The name is a useless thing.

From our ancestors came our names, but from our virtues our honours.

781. Riu nī thatū, no riu rīngī nī mbura ya mahiga

Now we have misty weather, but after a while it hails.

To become worse and worse.

782. Rīgī rīa nyūmba ritirutagwo rīa gūtiria nyūmba ya ūngī

The door of one's hut is not taken to close another's hut.

He who has but one coat cannot lend it.

783. Rika na nyūmba itiūrāga

One does not lose the age-grade nor the clan-right.

Kikuyu circumcised in a particular season are banded together in an age group to which a name is given, after a special event of the season. This age-grade as well as the clan imply certain rights which no Kikuyu wants to give up.

No man is willing to waive his rights.

784. Riko na mwana na nda itiũĩ 'kwaga'
The hearth, the child and the belly ignore the word 'lack'.
785. Riko na mwana na nda itiganagia
The hearth, the child and the belly never have enough.
786. Ringĩra haria rŭkũgambĩra
Cross the stream where it roars.
Still waters run deep.
787. Ritho rĩarĩra rĩarĩria iniũrũ
The watering eye makes the nose water.
When the head aches all the body is the worse.
788. Ritho riathigithwo rĩarĩra
The eye, which is disturbed, waters.
Let sleeping dogs lie.
789. Ritho rĩmenaga njamba
The eye scorns heroes; i.e. it can judge falsely of what it sees.
Never judge from appearances.
790. Ritho rĩũĩ thaka rĩtiũĩ ngamini
The eye discerns the beauty but not the kindness (of a person).
791. Ritho ti ndamĩ
The eye is not a piece of cloth (which can be thrown away).
The eye is the pearl of the face.
792. Ritho ti ndathio
The eye is not a thing which can be asked for.
793. Riũa ritietagĩrĩra mũthamaki
The sun does not wait for the judge.
The sun may do its duty though your grapes do not ripen.
794. Riũa rĩtirĩ gĩtonga no ngĩa theri
For the sun there are no rich, but only poor people.
The proverb means that in the dry season neither the rich nor the poor people can plant.
The sun shines on the just and the unjust.

795. Rũũa rūkuhĩ rūtirĩ thogora
A short hide is of no value.
796. Rũũa rwa mwene rūtirĩ iringa
The owner of the goat does not give away its hide.
 The proverb refers to the fact that the skin of a slaughtered goat belongs by right to the animal's owner, who does not allow anybody else to have it for nothing. Metaphorically it means that nobody gives his life but for a cause worthy of it.
797. Rũga runaga ũta
The string (too tightly strung) breaks the bow.
 A bow long bent at last waxeth weak.
798. Rũgendo rwa njũa na rwa mbũri ititwaranaga
Hides and goats do not keep the same pace (when they are taken to market).
 In fact goats go on foot while hides are carried by men, who actually go more quickly.
 Every man in his way.
799. Rũgũtema rūtiagaga igeca
The cutting knife does not lack bruises.
 Touch pitch and you will be defiled.
800. Rũhiũ rūgĩ nĩ rūtuikaga
A knife too well sharpened easily breaks.
 To kill with kindness.
801. Ruhonge rwa mũtĩ rūtithendũkaga mũndũ
A tree branch cannot put forth a man.
 Nothing comes out of the sack but what was in it.
802. Rũĩ rūnenehagio nĩ tũthima
The river is made bigger by the small springs.
 Little winnings make a heavy purse.
803. Rũĩ rūtithamaga mũkuru waruo
A river is not made to flow out of its bed.
 Every sparrow to its ear of wheat.

804. Rūkaga rūtaraire rūgakīra rūraire

An occurrence in the morning can be of more importance than one of the night before.

Problems should be dealt with in order of importance, not in order of time.

805. Rūmīra nguo harīa hatarī ihoro

Take hold of your clothes where there is no hole (lest you would tear them even more).

806. Rūmwe rūranagwo rūkīrīa: rwagomania hīa rūgacokanwo

The members of one clan can leave one another, but after all they return (to help one another).

Mutual assistance is one of the pacts by which members of one clan are bound.

807. Rūmwe rūtiūranagwo, no kūrikana rūrikanaga

The clan does not break, but its members can separate.

808. Rūrakora mūdū rūtirī mūthemere

The fate, dear man, cannot be avoided.

809. Rūrī itara rūthekaga rūrī riko

The firewood which is in the pile laughs at the firewood which is already in the fire.

Today me, tomorrow thee.

810. Rūrī kuuma njora rūticokaga tūhū

The knife which has been unsheathed does not return into its sheath without having done some work.

811. Rūrīmī rwa ngīa rūtithiraga kīmanda

The poor man's tongue is always thin.

Since a poor man's tongue is supposed to utter only words of no importance, so it is said to be thin. The meaning of the proverb is that a poor man will never be listened to.

The poor man's wisdom is as useless as a palace in a wilderness.

812. Rūrī mūciī rūrī mūgūnda

If you have a pain at home, you have it in the field too.

No place is fenced against suffering.

813. Rūrī na Komū rūrī na Kaigū wa nyina

If Komu has it, Kaigu, his brother, has it too.

'Komū' and 'Kaigū' are used in Kikuyu proverbs to denote brothers. The proverb means that if a man has something (either good or bad) his brother has a share in it too.

814. Rūrira rūtithambagio rūūi

Family-ties cannot be washed at the river, i.e. cannot be untied.

815. Rūrīgi rūrī nja rūtiagaga gia kuoha

The string in the courtyard does not lack something to tie (in due time, although at present it may seem a useless thing).

816. Rūrīgi rwetagīrīria mūdū mūkwa

The string can be useful until a rope (of hide) can be got
Little is better than nothing.

817. Rūtemaga mwenji

The knife cuts him who shaves another.

A knave is often caught in his own trap.

818. Rūthuko rūnungaga rūrī mbūthū

The 'rūthuko' spreads its smell from its container.

'Rūthuko' is a medicine given by a witch-doctor to a trapper to help him to attract prey, or to a shepherd to call his sheep. It should be burnt and the smell of the smoke is supposed to be a call for animals. But natives believe the medicine to exercise its power even from its container.

The proverb compares the smell of the medicine to the words of man, which are supposed to be a reflection of his mind and means that one can judge him from his words.

819. Rūtungu rŭmwe rŭtiraragia mwaki
One piece of wood only does not keep the fire alight.
 One stroke fells not an oak.
820. Rūtungu rwa gwitiniria rŭtirĩ gĩthong'ori
The log which I myself cut has no knot.
 Every potter praises his own pot, and more if it be broken.
821. Rŭtwaraga mŭthambiri
The stream drowns even the swimmer.
822. Rŭu nĩ rŭrigi rwa kŭruta rŭngĩ kinya
That is a thread for pulling another thread out of the 'kinya'.
 'Kinya' is a calabash used to draw water or to hold gruel. Here it is taken to mean the hidden place wherein one's secrets are kept. The proverb is told to people who ask indirect questions for discovering what they cannot learn directly.
823. Ruuo rŭriaga mwene
The pain is felt by its owner (and not by another).
824. Ruuo rŭtiganagĩrwo
Pain cannot be felt by one for the other.
825. Rutaniria mŭigwa na mahira
Take out the pus with the thorn.
 Do nothing by halves.
826. Rwambo rŭmwe rŭtiambaga ndarwa
One peg only does not stretch out a skin.
 No living man all things can.
827. Rwendo nĩ ũnyamarania
Love means trouble.
 Love is a sweet tyranny, because the lover endures his torments willingly.
828. Rwendo rŭkirite ihaki
Love exceeds reward.
 Love is not mean.

829. Rwendo rwarutire mwana wa nderi igũrũ

Love put the eaglet out of its nest.

The Kikuyu say that the young eagles, if left alone in the nest by their parents try to do as the parents do out of love for them and leap out of the nest; but in so doing they kill themselves.

Love is blind.



830. Tha cia arũme itiri iria

Males' pity has no milk.

It means that men are unable to stop the crying of a baby by suckling it. Metaphorically the proverb means that men feel no less pity than women, although they show less.

831. Thaka ya mwene ndiunĩkaga

The owner's beauty does not break.

Every man thinks his own geese swans.

832. Thakame ndiri ndũgũ

Blood has need of no friendship.

The proverb means that the best friendship is the one that comes from relationship; for, as it has been told before, all the members of a clan are tied by the bond of helping one another.

Blood is thicker than water.

833. Thatũ ihakagwo maguta na gati

The 'thatũ' is smeared with fat and driven out.

'Thatũ' is the name of a big caterpillar which infests sweet potato plantations. To the Kikuyu it is a creature of bad omen; that is why, when it happens to enter their huts they do not kill it, but rather smear it with fat and take it out carefully to propitiate the spirit.

Misfortunes that cannot be avoided, must be sweetened.

834. Thegere igĩrĩ itiremagwo nĩ mwaṭũ

Two 'thegere' are not overpowered by a beehive.

'Thegere' is a small mammal, about the size of a pole-cat common in Kikuyu land. It is fond of honey.

The proverb means that only one 'thegere' would be unable to pull a beehive down from a tree. But if two of them join together, they easily succeed in overturning and emptying it.

Union is strength.

835. Thekanĩrĩro nĩ hĩtahĩtano

He who laughs at others will be laughed at.

836. Thĩ na igũrũ itimenyanaga

The earth and the sky do not know each other.

The proverb means that nobody can foretell the weather.

837. Thĩga nĩ mũruu: marara nja gũtirĩ

'Thĩga' is circumcised: there is no reward for passing the night in the courtyard.

'Thĩga' means a certain fellow. The proverb originates in one of the many customs relating to the Kikuyu ceremony of circumcision.

On the eve of the circumcision-day women and girls gather at the hut of the candidate and sing for a great part in the night; not gratuitously, but in the hope of getting food and beer from the candidate's mother. But if when the rite is completed, she makes as an excuse that now the child is circumcised and refuses to give them what they expect, they start singing the above strain, meaning: 'Have no recourse to the idle pretext that your son is now circumcised; but rather give us the reward to which we are entitled after a night's singing and dancing'.

Eaten bread is soon forgotten.

838. Thĩna ndũrĩ mĩrĩ

The 'thĩna' has no roots.

'Thĩna' is the name of a kind of leafless plant growing on trees. It also means affliction, troubles, sadness, poverty.

Troubles pass.

839. Thina ndūtīgaga handū ūramenyera
Affliction does not leave a place which is already known to her.

One danger is seldom overcome without another.

840. Thina ndūtūūraga
Affliction does not last.

After a storm comes a calm.

841. Thina nī rūhiū rwa gūicūhia mūro
Affliction is a good knife to sharpen the 'mūro'.
'Mūro' is a short stick used to beat the earth, to plant, to dig out potatoes, etc.

Necessity sharpens industry.

842. Thia ndithiragwo nī mīhūmū
The duiker cannot help panting.
The leopard cannot change his spots.

843. Thia ndithiragwo nī mūnithi
The duiker is not found without head stripes.
Man is what God has made him and nothing else.

844. Thiaka nī ūta
Quiver means bow (for there is no quiver but it has also its bow).

845. Thiaka ūiniī ndwagaga gūita migwī
A quiver upside down cannot fail to pour out its arrows.
The proverb is an excuse for an error which depends only on human weakness.
To err is human.

846. Thiari ndīrerega kwa ngīa
The 'thiari' does not hover above a poor man's house.
'Thiari' is the tick-bird. The proverb says that this bird does not stay with the poor for there are no oxen to provide ticks.
A poor man has no friends.

847. Thirī ūtarīhagio no wa ūrogi

The debt of poisoning a person is a debt which cannot be paid.
All the other crimes can be paid for with a number of goats, but the crime of bewitching must be expiated by heavier punishment.

848. Thiriti nī ĭteanaga

Friendships dissolve.

849. Thiriti nī ya andū erī, ya atatū nī rūmena

Friendship can exist between two people, friendship of three people would mean strife.

Two's company, three's none.

850. Thiriti yagīa kīhehū no ĭthire

Friendship finishes if there are whisperings.

851. Thogora nī mūrurumo ūtarūo

Buying (and selling) brings in much noise but no strife.

852. Thogora ndūrī nyina na mwana

Buying and selling has neither mother nor son.

Friendship is friendship and business is business.

853. Thome wa anake ndūrī thogora no tharo

Young unmarried men do not buy in their 'thome': they steal things.

'Thome' is the pathway leading up to the entrance of the Kikuyu homestead. It is made in the shape of a narrow passage which can be closed at night or in time of danger. The proverb means that nothing orderly can be done when only youngsters are present.

854. Thoni itirī gathuthuma

Shyness has no sucking.

It means that if a calf is shy it will be afraid to approach its mother and consequently will get no milk.

855. Thoni nene nī ūkarī

Too much shyness means miserliness.

There is measure in all things.

856. Thũ ndigũaga haria iikagio

The enemy does not fall where one throws him.

Man proposes, God disposes.

857. Thũ ndiagaga mwenji

An enemy does not lack someone to shave him; i.e. to keep him informed of what is going about him, and very often to give him help.

858. Thũmbi iri nyone, mwene ni muone

If one sees the ostrich-feather head-dress, one sees also the owner of it.

The Kikuyu warriors used to pass over the head and under the chin a strap carrying ostrich feathers. Such a head-dress is used today only by young men at the circumcision ceremonies.

The proverb means that if you see anyone wearing such an ornament, you easily recognize him as a warrior.

859. Thurania gũkua na kũhona

Choose between dying and living; i.e. between death and life, war and peace.

860. Thutha mweka ni wa ndũrũme

It is proper of the ram to have a good tail.

It means that the good side of many a thing is not found at the beginning of it, but at the end, just as the best part of the ram is not its head, but its fat tail.

The best fish swim near the bottom.

861. Thutha ni mwariĩ

The afterwards is wide.

The future holds many happenings.

862. Thutha wa arũme nduoyagwo ruoya

Where men have passed there is not a single feather to pick up.

863. Thutha wa maũndũ mothe ni Mwathani

After all, there is God.

Man proposes, God disposes.

864. Tiga gũkunga hīra-inī na tama mwerũ

If you wear white clothes do not hide in a place where the grass has been burnt (for you would easily be discovered). The proverb means that it is useless to tell lies that are obviously lies.

865. Tiga gũkungia ũgĩ ũgĩ-inī

Do not show wisdom where there is wisdom.

To carry coals to Newcastle.

866. Tiga thina: toboka: ndũcũnaga kīihũri

Cease repining: go on; you are not like a child that licks the 'kīihũri'.

Kīihũri' is a half calabash used as a ladle or an eating bowl. The proverb means that a man must not be timid like a child that is afraid of his mother's rebuke and dares not lay down the 'kīihũri' used for gruel, if it is not licked.

Fortune helps them that help themselves.

867. Tiga kūhoya ngi thakame

Do not expect blood from a fly.

If you squeeze a cork, you will get but little juice.

868. Tiga kwaria na kanua ka ngoma

Stop talking with the mouth of the 'ngoma'.

'Ngoma' are the spirits of the departed in which the Kikuyu firmly believe.

Keep your tongue within your teeth.

869. Tiga kuonia ngarĩ kūhaica mūtĩ

Stop teaching the leopard how to climb a tree.

Don't teach your grandmother how to knit.

870. Tūtikũhe hiti kerĩ

We do not give twice to the hyena.

Once bitten, twice shy.

871. Tūtũ ũrĩ mwana ndũnyitagia ngotho

The man who has a family does not adorn his arm with finery.

Children are certain cares, but uncertain comforts.

872. Turuma yakira kīrugo

A sip is better than a feast.

The proverb means that a sip of beer given to him who happens to call on a friend during a beer drinking is more appreciated than a feast to which one has been invited (and has therefore waited for).

873. Tuoko tūingī tūthūranaga tūkīrīa

Many hands eating (from the same dish) hate one another.

Two cats and a mouse, two wives in one house, two dogs and a bone never agree in one.

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874. Ūbataire ahūrithagia kīhīi ime

He who is in need sends his boy when there is still the dew.

Need makes the naked man trot.

875. Ūbataire ndaconokaga

The person who is in need does not feel ashamed.

Need makes the naked queen spin.

876. Ūbataire nīwe ūhuraga ūrīrī

It is the person who feels the need (of sleeping) that prepares the bed.

Let him that is cold blow the coal.

877. Ūcamba ndūringaga tūhuro twīrī

(Even) bravery does not cross two valleys (at one time).

Samson was a strong man, yet could not pay money before he had it.

878. Ūcokereru nī ūkīgu

To return (to the same thing, argument, etc.) is foolishness.

A tale twice told is cabbage twice sold.

879. Ūcukagwo na ndūgūteo

You are slandered without being thrown away.

880. Ūgakinya mūhūa gūtari gatī

(The time will come when) you will step on the 'mūhūa' in a place where there is no other plant.

'Mūhūa' is a common forest tree yielding a very poor timber. The proverb means that he who despises this tree because it is of little value and there is plenty of good timber, will go so far as to scorn it even when no better timber is available.

Half a loaf is better than no bread.

881. Ūgakinya na mūtwe, wiirite nī magūrū

You will move on the head thinking it is the feet.

It is said to proud people who think they know everything.

Do as most men do and men will speak well of thee.

882. Ūgathina ta ritho gwakia

You shall have pains like the eye that opens in the morning.

The proverb is a curse, and refers to the pain which one's eyes are supposed to feel when, after a night's pleasant dreams, they open again to this world's miseries.

883. Ūgī mūnene ūtuaga ithanwa

Too great a wisdom breaks the axe.

Too much breaks the bag.

884. Ūgī ndūtongoragia ta ūrimū

Wisdom does not go in front as foolishness; i.e. is not so easily attained as foolishness.

No man is born wise or learned.

885. Ūgī nī kihooto

Knowledge is power.

886. Ūgī ūgīgū

(There is) wisdom (that is) a bluff.

All is not gold that glitters.

887. Ūgī ūkīrite hinya

Wisdom outweighs strength.

888. Ūgĩ wa arũme ūtemaga ta hiũ

Men's skill cuts like knives.

Words are for women, actions for men.

889. Ūgĩ wa mũndũ ūmwe ndũrĩmaga

Only one man's ability cannot till (all the fields).

No living man all things can.

890. Ūgeni wa nyama ndũoyagĩrũo nguo

He who has been invited to eat meat does not waste time looking for good clothes.

The proverb means that if anyone has received an invitation for a feast he does not waste time in adorning himself at the risk of arriving too late.

891. Ugĩthondekera mũcii ndũngiuga nĩ ūrikora ūngĩ

While you adorn your house, you do not imagine that you will find another (more adorned than yours).

The proverb refers to self confident people who go to discuss a question with the certainty of getting the best of it, and do not think that perhaps they will meet an adversary stronger than they are.

The first caper of fools is to esteem themselves wise.

892. Ūgwithirima mũtino

You smear yourself with misfortune.

The proverb is told as an advice to people who are on the point of doing something which sooner or later will become a cause of misfortune.

He that cuts himself wilfully, will deserve no balsam.

893. Ūhere nĩ ūgwatanagio

Scabies is contracted (by contact).

A rotten sheep infects the whole flock.

894. Ūhĩĩ nĩ umagwo, no ūka ndumagwo

The man comes out of childhood, but the woman never comes out of womanhood.

To understand the proverb, it must be remembered that

according to the Kikuyu law, after the initiation a boy is no longer a boy, but a man in the fullness of his rights. On the other hand a girl, even when circumcised, does not become entitled to new rights.

895. Ūhoi nĩ ũgariũrĩre

Asking for something is like turning (potatoes in the fire or meat on the spit).

The proverb means that he who wants to succeed in a petition tries all ways, just as he who is roasting his food turns it on all sides.

896. Ūhorō wa maitho ti wa rūthiomi

What one sees with one's eyes is not what one hears from another's tongue.

One eye-witness is better than ten hearsays.

897. Ūhũniĩ ndarĩ kĩaha

He who is sated has no affliction.

898. 'Ūi, ũi' ĩgunaga kī?

What is the use of crying 'ũi, ũi'?

'Ūi, ũi' is an interjection of grief.

What cannot be cured must be endured.

899. Ūi tene ĩ . . .

Oh, for the (good) past!

This is an expression often heard in the mouths of Kikuyu elders and corresponds to:

'Past and to come seem best: things present, worst'.

900. Ūkabi nĩ mũhũũnu mũtu

The Masai have had their fill of flour.

The Kikuyu used to sell maize and millet flour to their neighbours the Masai. But if they happened to sell it a little too dear, the flour trade became the spark which kindled one of the many raids which ended only when the British Government confined the Masai to their present territory.

The proverb had the meaning of an alarm, as to say:

'Now that the Masai have eaten all the flour we have sold them dear, we may expect their revenge'.

A little spark can kindle a great fire.

901. Ūkeni ndūtũũraga

Joy does not last.

Pleasant hours fly fast.

902. Ūkũndihia ũgacoka kũnjũria ndarĩo nĩ kũ?

You wound me and then ask what is ailing me?

903. Ūkũrũ ndugaga mbu

Old age does not shout any notice-cry.

Time is the rider that breaks youth.

904. Ūkũrũ nĩ ta wonje

Old age is like being lame.

The proverb is told by or to old women.

Old bees yield no honey.

905. Ūkũrũ ũriaga wanake

Old age eats youth.

Old age creeps in.

906. Ūkwenda mũnyũ mbere ya mũcini

You want the salt before the person who burned the salt-grass.

To understand this proverb it must be borne in mind that, before the arrival of Europeans, the Kikuyu obtained salt from the ashes of salt-grass. (See also No. 629.)

No cross, no crown.

907. Ūmenyagwo nĩ mũraari, ti mũroki

Home affairs are known by him who sleeps in the home, not by him who only comes in the morning.

None knows the weight of another's burden.

908. Ūndiaga rĩmwe na ũgi

You sometimes eat me by cunningness.

In this proverb 'to eat' means 'to cheat'.

909. Ũndũ ũkwendwo ndũtanukagwo nĩ kũmerio ũmeragio
*The thing that one finds palatable is not chewed, but it is
swallowed quickly.*

910. Ũngũigua igĩkaya nĩ nũme
*If you hear a goat moan, it is because she has been bitten.
No smoke without fire.*

911. Ũndũ ũrekwo ndũcokagĩrwo
One must not return on the work done.
The proverb means that one must not be too attentive
to the details of his work if one wants to finish it, since—
Perfection is not of this world.

912. Ũngĩgacema mũno kahahũka
If you go too carefully, (the chance) will pass away.
Sleeping foxes catch no poultry.

913. Ũngũigua kaana gakiuga ũndũ ũgakahũra: menya
kaiguĩte na ithe
*When you hear your child say anything, you beat him;
remember that he says what he has heard from his father.*
Children pick up words as pigeons peas, and utter them again
as God shall please.

914. Ũngĩria irio cia mũthemba ũmwe iri kinyiria
*If you eat ever of the same food, it becomes bitter: it is
a good thing to change.*
Change of pasture makes fat calves.

915. Ũngĩona ikirĩte, ĩmeretie ĩngĩ
*If you see a quiet snake, it is because it swallowed another
snake.*
Beware of a silent dog and still water.

916. Ũracama arĩ njeme
He who has tasted (food) has its appetite.
The proverb means that, if a man has willingly started
to do some job, he is not satisfied until he completes it.

917. Ūrathīna mūgūnda wa mwana ndarī

He who is in trouble lacks (also) a field for his son.

Misfortunes seldom come alone.

918. Ūrī kūhitia na mbugi, ndūrathaga na njoya

If you have missed with the point (of the arrow) you do not hit with the feathers.

Resist the beginnings.

919. Ūrī kūngariūra ta mūtura wa ihīi

You have tried to roast me as boys roast goat's bowels.

When a goat or an ox is slaughtered, it is a Kikuyu custom to give the bowels to the uncircumcised for them to roast.

The proverb is a contemptuous expression meaning 'I know that you want to deceive me: but don't expect to succeed as easily as boys succeed in roasting the bowels they are given'.

920. Ūrī kwīrūkīra ndūngīthondekeka

If you despair you are not cured.

The proverb refers to women who go to the witch-doctors for a remedy for their sterility.

Not to have hope is the poorest of all conditions.

921. Ūrī mwega no ūkamenyeka

If you are good you are known.

Good wine needs no bush.

922. Ūrī na ithe ndaringagwo wa ngoro

He who has a father is not knocked down by any of those words or deeds that hurt one's heart (for he has somebody to defend him).

923. Ūrī ndūgū nyingī ndatukagīrīrwo

He who has many friends is not caught by darkness in the road; i.e. he has a lodging for the night.

924. Ūrī witū ūtandiga na ndūnjerera

You are a person who neither leaves nor waits for me.

To have two strings to one bow.

925. Ūrī wona rūkūre?

Have you ever seen an unsheathed knife (a thing that has frightened you)?

Scalded cats fear even cold water.

926. Ūrīmi ndūhinyaga

The tilling does not come to an end.

927. Ūrirū ndūthiraga

Misfortune that has put down roots, does not finish.

Mischiefs come by the pound, and go away by the ounce.

928. Ūrugarī ndūrī indo, nī heho īrī indo

It is not warming oneself (staying at home) that makes one rich, but talking with many people.

God helps them who help themselves.

929. Ūrugīte na ūrugīte matihoyanaga

Two persons, who have both cooked their food, do not beg from one another.

930. Ūrutagwo mwīruti

The work is done if one does it.

If you want anything done, do it yourself.

931. Ūtahetwo nī mūigīre

Also for the man who has not yet received a present, there is something put aside for him.

Everything comes to him who waits.

932. Ūtamerithītie ndaigaga kīgīna thī

He whose seeds have not germinated, does not lay down his 'kīgīna'.

'Kīgīna' means the seeds put by for planting next season.

Perseverance kills the game.

933. Ūtana ūminagīra mūrokerwo ng'ombe

Prodigality ruined the man who used to give away his oxen.

The legend, from which this proverb originates, tells that a very rich man used to present all his visitors with

an ox, with the result that very soon he found himself reduced to poverty.

Prodigality brings a man to a morsel of bread.

934. Ūtana wa ngia ūragira ngoro

A poor man's generosity is lost in his heart (for he has nothing to show it with).

935. Ūtari kondo ari kagara

*The person who has not a small bag, has a small basket.
Every man has his lot.*

936. Ūtari ndari ngoro

He who has nothing has no heart.

The proverb means that a poor man, though refused what he asks for, does not feel so much pain as a rich man would, for the latter knows the difference between possessing and not possessing what one needs.

Nothing have, nothing crave.

937. Ūtari maitho ndatumaga kinya

A blind man does not sew a gourd.

The Kikuyu make use of the dried shell of gourds as dippers and ladles. They mend them with a rough thread when they crack.

Blind men should not judge of colours.

938. Ūtari ndetagwo ndundu

A poor man is not invited to a private discussion.

939. Ūtarĩa ciene na ndarĩa ciake

He is a person that does not eat other's food, nor his own.

The proverb refers to people who are not able to take advantage of their own things, nor of those of other people.

940. Ūtatiga ndakora

He who does not leave, will not find.

No gains without pains.

941. Ūtenderū ndūrī njamba

Slipping has no hero, i.e. nobody however clever he may be, is guaranteed against a fall when walking on a slippery road.

No fence against ill fortune.

942. Ūtenderū ūrī nja ndūrī mūthemere

Nobody can avoid the slippery place that is in the courtyard.

What cannot be cured must be endured.

943. Ūthayo na ng'aragu nī mūdū na mūrū wa nyina

Laziness and starvation are like a man and his brother.

Laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him.

944. Ūthaka ndūriagwo

Beauty is not eaten.

Beauty will buy no beef.

945. Ūthuuri wa gītonga ndūnungaga

A rich man's old age has no bad smell.

Rich men have no faults.

946. Ūthuuri wa kanua ūkīrite wa mīaka

Mouth's old age is better than year's old age.

The proverb means that it is of no use to be old in years, if one does not show this old age by wise words, too.

An old goat is never the more revered for his beard.

947. Ūthū ndūhingagia

Hatred does not affect all.

The proverb means that he who is hated by some people is not necessarily hated also by all the others.

948. Ūthuuro mweka ndūiyūraga ikūmbī

The picking up of only the good things does not fill one's barn.

949. Ūtoī karirūi, oī waci

He who does not know how to dance the 'karirui' knows how to dance the 'waci'.

'Karirui' and 'waci' are two native dances. The meaning of the proverb is the same as the following one.

950. Ūtoĩ ūũ, oĩ ūũ

He who does not know one thing, knows another.

Every man hath his lot.

951. Ūtonga ndūhanyūkagīrwo

Riches are not attained by running.

952. Ūtonga nĩ kīgunyĩ

Riches are a shadow.

Riches have wings.

953. Ūtonga ndūrĩ nyoni

Riches have no bird of ill omen.

954. Ūtonga wa mūici ndūthunaga, na nĩ ūteaga wake

Unlawful riches do not increase, but rather spoil the lawful ones.

Ill-gotten things seldom prosper.

955. Ūtukũ ndūtumagwo nguo

One does not sew clothes by night.

There is a time for all things.



956. Wa githĩ ndagiragia wa kio akagĩa

He who feels envy cannot prevent a man of energy from becoming enriched.

Envy never enriched any man.

957. Wa haraya ūhoragira njira

The fire which comes from afar dies out in the way.

Out of sight, out of mind.

958. Wa hwaĩ-inĩ warũgwo nĩ wa kiroko

What happens in the morning, surpasses what happened the preceding evening.

Every day brings a new light.

959. Wa kīrimũ wītirimagia na mūgi

The fool's staff (walking stick) is used by the wise.

The proverb means that something belonging to a fool may help the wise, as the fool does not know how to use it to his benefit.

960. Wa mbūri ndūteagwo ũtarĩ mwatie

The goat bone is not thrown away if it is not completely chipped.

Do nothing by halves.

961. Wa kuona ndangihitia

He who sees does not err.

One eye-witness is better than ten hearsays.

962. Wa mūcarĩ wagwatirie wa mūtigiri

Yaws causes one to be attacked by chicken pox too.

Misfortunes seldom come alone.

963. Wa Ngai ũraragio nĩ magoto

God's fire keeps alight with 'magoto'.

'Magoto' is dry banana bark which is much used for thatching but of no use as firewood. The proverb means that God can kindle a fire and keep it alive with unsuitable materials.

With God all things are possible.

964. Wa mūingĩ wathūra mūtiri

The work of many people scorns him who does not do it.

Work, however heavy it may be, if done by many people seems to become light for each worker. This is why the proverb says that he who refused to do his part should be despised by the work itself.

965. Wa mūrūngūru ūrūraga na ime

The squirrel walks in the dew.

The proverb originates in the fact that the squirrel is often seen in the road by early travellers, which would suggest that it rises very early in the morning. The Kikuyu say the proverb as a reply when, met by friends in the road, they are asked about the place they are coming from and why they are travelling so early. It means: I start my work early because I am like the squirrel that knows that morning hours are the best.

The early bird catches the worm.

966. Wa mūru ūnungaga ūrī thiaka

A wicked man's arrow emits its unpleasant smell even if hidden in the quiver.

Stinking fish are felt from afar.

967. Wa mwangi ndūtogaga kerī

The fire of the 'Mwangi' does not smoke twice.

'Mwangi' is the name of one of the major ruling generations. The representatives of each generation stand in authority and are responsible for the conduct of public affairs all over Kikuyu land for about thirty years. After such a term there is a ceremony of handing over the custody of the affairs of the tribe from one generation to the next. The handing-over rite takes months and even years to complete.

When the Consolata Fathers entered Kikuyu land in 1902 the Maina generation was handing over its powers to the Mwangi generation, which in its turn has already begun to hand over to the Irungu.

Time flies away without delay.

968. Wa mwega ta wa mūru

The case of the good man is like the bad one's.

The sentence is said by elders when judging tribal questions, and means that all people have the same right and nobody can expect to have his case discussed before another's: every one must wait his turn.

969. Wa mwene ūthũire thakame

One hates to see the blood of a thing that belongs to him.
The proverb means that one's heart is affected by the pains of the persons and animals whom one loves.

Whom we love best, them we want to be happy.

970. Wa mwĩrĩ ndũmenyagwo

What is inside the body is not known.

No one knows the weight of another's burden.

971. Wa mwitũmo ndũremaga

The work one imposed on oneself is never impossible.

Where there is a will there is a way.

972. Wainaga nĩ eroragĩra

He who used to dance, now looks on.

973. Wairire ndakerũha

He who has ever been black will never become white.

A leopard cannot change his spots.

974. Wanyua inyuaga mũguĩ

He who drinks (beer in company) drinks an arrow at the same time.

The proverb means that people who drink beer together as a token of friendship, drink as well an arrow which they will use to shoot one another as soon as their friendship breaks.

975. Wariire athĩnirie waigire

He who has eaten (all his food) vexes him who has put some aside.

A fool and his money are soon parted.

976. Warũgaga nĩ atobokaga

He who used to jump across now wades through.

Old age creeps in.

977. We ūrĩ karĩa nĩme

You are one who eats the fruit of what your father has planted.

The proverb is a reproach and a warning to young people who expend lavishly what they have inherited from their parents.

What costs little is little esteemed.

978. We ũrĩ mũnyota matahwo

You are only thirsty when somebody has drawn the water.

The proverb is told to lazy people.

979. Wega na wega iticemanagia

Good and good never meet.

Perfection is not of this world.

980. Wega ũrĩ mbere ya kahinga

The good is to be found beyond the bush, i.e. the obstacle.

No gains without pains.

981. Wega umaga mūcīi

Prosperity is found in one's home.

Look to the cow, and the sow, and the wheat mow, and all will be well now.

982. Wega wariüre karīgū

Illicit love spoilt the uncircumcised girl.

Sexual relation between an uncircumcised girl and a circumcised young man is considered unmentionable depravity by the Kikuyu.

The reward of unlawful pleasure is lawful pain.

983. Werū ũgũthogoranīrwo ndūagaga rūitiki

The open country where markets are held does not lack rubbish.

984. Werū wa arūme ndwagaga kūnunga

The open place where men used to stay cannot help stinking (because of the many quarrels and thefts which occur therein).

985. Wiīgūire ndahūtaga

He who put something aside will not starve.

Thrift is good revenue.

986. Wira wa mũingi ũragaga kīrimũ

Many people's work kills the fool (because he does alone what should be done by many).

987. Wirane ndũrĩ ngarari

He who has been warned does not dispute.

A word is enough to the wise.

988. Witeithie ngũteithie

Help yourself so that I may help you.

God helps those who help themselves.

989. Wona ciene waruta ndũngũrũ, wona ciaku wacokia ndũngũrũ

When you see another's things your mouth waters; when you see your own you swallow such water.

990. Wonaga nĩ agaga

He who had things, may stand in need.

Today gold, tomorrow dust.

991. Woni ũrĩ njacĩ, wagi gĩtaranio

To have means mischief, to lack means thought.

Misfortunes tell us what fortune is.



992. Ya gwithurĩra ndirĩ gĩthegenywa

The ox one has chosen has no imperfection.

993. Ya gwithurĩra ndĩrĩ ihĩndĩ

The meat one has chosen has no bone.

994. Ya kũhĩa ihĩaga na ma mbere

The food which cooks well is cooked with the first water.

The Kikuyu believe that the food which is not cooked in the first water, would not be cooked even if new water should be added, and it is therefore to be thrown away.

Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.

995. Ya matharara igwatagia ya nyeki

The hut thatched only with bad grass sets fire to the one covered with good thatching grass.

A rotten sheep infects the whole flock.

996. Ya mwene ndirĩ njereri

One's own ox has no cast in the eye.

(See also No. 992 and No. 993.)

Every man thinks his own geese swans.

997. Ya rika ringĩ iriaga ikihurunjaga

The goat which is of another age group eats scattering the fodder.

The proverb originates in the fact of the distinction which is kept among people of different age-grade, and means that if a member of an age group is admitted to eat food with people of another, he grows proud and shows no respect towards them.

Familiarity breeds contempt.

998. Ya rika ithinjaga na mweri

People of the same age group slaughter the beast to be eaten even by night time.

The proverb refers to a Kikuyu custom. Young men of the same age group used to go round from village to village until they found a rich man who gave an ox or a goat for them to eat. And when the animal was found, they killed and broiled it even if the night had already come. The proverb means that one must finish what one has begun.

Do nothing by halves.

999. Yaciara mathathatũ yongithagio nĩ mwene

The she-goat that gives birth to six kids feeds them too.

1000. Yaikio iikagia ingĩ

The goat that is pushed forward pushes forward the other.

One fool makes many.